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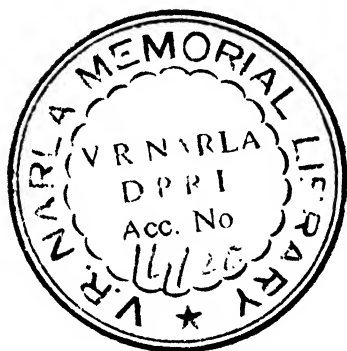
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A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING

BY

E. V. LUCAS



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P R E F A C E

THE contents of this one volume have been chosen from many. I have to thank Messrs. Chatto and Windus for allowing me to make an extract from *Anne's Terrible Good Nature*, and Messrs. Wells, Gardner, Darton & Co. for allowing extracts from *The Slowcoach* and *Another Book of Verses for Children*. The remaining works levied upon are all published by Messrs. Methuen & Co.

E. V. L.

Summer, 1912

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A LITTLE OF EVERYTHING

THE ABERDEEN *

I AM only just beginning really to understand the nature of the Aberdeen. Our last was a very ingratiating little bitch, full of affection and roguishness, who, however, was with us for so short a time, and during that time was so occupied in thoughts as to how to evade our vigilance and be getting on with the true business of life, becoming a mother—that we never had the undress material workings of her mind at all. Even when most coquettish and endearing, even when putting in motion all the machinery of loveliness, with her head on one's chest and the ridiculous boot buttons which she called her eyes looking up into one's face, her brain, to a keen observer, was manifestly busy over one matter only, and that the old topic.

• Precautions we had to take, because there were two very sound reasons why Betty ought not to have puppies yet. One was that she was far too young, being herself but a mere chit; and the other that the neighbourhood contained no husband of equal birth. But one might as well attempt to stop the tide as control these affairs. A male Aberdeen

* From *Character and Comedy*.

mysteriously appeared within call, and Betty's face assumed an expression of amused satisfaction. . . .

Her owners, however, who became wise only long after the event, had no suspicion. . . .

One day she disappeared, and was absent for so long—nearly a week—that we gave her up completely. And then one evening she suddenly was in the room again, very thin, very demonstrative, but also very nervous and restless. She ran to the door and back again. She whined all the time.

There is a story in a book that I read far too many years ago, when I was at my first school, which tells how a merchant who was travelling with a large bag of money sat down by the roadside to rest, and on resuming his journey forgot (as merchants do in stories, but nowhere else) his property. His dog, however, perceived the error, and, by jumping up at him and barking, did its best to impede his steps, make him think, and drive him back. The merchant endured this for some time, and then, persuaded that the creature was mad, and having tested it with water, which it was too unhappy to stop and drink, drew his pistol and shot it. The poor thing, bleeding horribly, crawled away and disappeared. Some hours afterwards the merchant at last missed his bag, hurriedly retraced his steps to his resting-place, and there found it safe and sound—with his dog's lifeless body stretched across it. True or untrue, this story made a great impression on me, and I remember determining never to be so foolish as to disregard in the unimaginative mercantile manner the dumb gestures of any animal; and therefore, when Betty had run to the door and back several times, I lit a lantern, tied a long string to her collar, and expressed my intention of going with her wherever she might lead, no matter how far.

She took me painfully at my word, dragging me at a gallop down an almost vertical bank, thick with brambles and very wet with dew. On and on I went, slipping and sliding and torn, until she suddenly

disappeared as thoroughly as if the earth had swallowed her. As it indeed had, for she had entered a large deep hole under the roots of a tree. With great difficulty I hauled her forth again and stretched my arm into the hole as far as it would go, but could feel nothing. Meanwhile Betty was so pulling at the cord and fighting to get back again that I allowed her to do so, listening the while very attentively, and I was presently aware of a faint whimpering in the remoter recesses of this planet, and knew the secret of her absence and her retreat. She had puppies, and in her pride of motherhood had chosen to make her own home for them. No one should help. It was only because hunger had conquered that she had returned to the house.

Her pride, however, was not stubborn, and when the puppies were extricated with a rake and placed comfortably in a basket near the fire, she was the happiest mother that the Granite City ever sent forth.

With Betty my acquaintance with Aberdeens for a while ceased, for she soon after left us, and her one puppy that we kept early developed fits and died—the effect, I imagine, of his mother's maternal precocity. But recently I have taken up my studies in Aberdeen terrierdom again, having acquired direct from Aberdeen one Bobby, who is, I am told, a fine example of the breed. He travelled alone at the age of four months from Scotland to St. Pancras, and was to be fetched in the forenoon. It was, however, later before that could be, and in the meantime he had thrown the Aberdeen spell over most of the parcels' office staff, and was surrounded by the luxuries of the season. I doubt if any other dog can do this as an Aberdeen can. It is a regular habit with Aberdeens to have all they want. I have a theory that this is partly because they are so like little pigs. Everyone adores little pigs, and everyone would like to pet one; but nobody has ever done so. In default, the Aberdeen puppy, who is the next thing to a little pig, receives a double share of

attention—part for his likeness to that other and part for himself. His nose, too, must have a share in his victories. It is the thin end of the wedge made visible. The rest cannot but follow.

I don't know how it is with Aberdeens whom time has sobered into grisly fidelity, such as I see following their masters as dinghys follow yachts; but at the age of six months, judging by this Bobby, they are not readily obedient, not brave, and not unselfishly affectionate. Such love as Bobby offers is cupboard love purely. He adds to these defects a curious lack of enterprise: he cares nothing for a walk. If by any chance it is necessary to chastise him or even reprimand him when he is out—principally for eating unsuitable things—he runs straight home again, and, carrying his wounded heart into the kitchen (where he reigns), is healed in the usual manner. It is my experience that dogs do not vary much: each is a type of his breed; and so I make bold to deduce from Bobby the generalisation that all Aberdeens are self-protective. Perhaps they get it from their country.

In a dog self-protectiveness is rather a grave defect, showing very black against the radiant whiteness of the character of the other dog here—a spaniel—who does all that one wants a dog to do: is very loyal, full of trust in you, brave, enterprising, and so much attached to his people that probably no amount even of actual cruelty would alienate him or cause him to prefer his own company. Indeed, he hates his own company; and that, I take it, is a virtue in a dog. But he has no finesse, no moods, no arts. You must take a spaniel for what he is—always the same. It is the special privilege of the Aberdeen puppy to have temperament and wiles: to get back by stealth, by cleverness, by sheer force of personality and a capriciousness as well ordered as that of any pretty actress, all and more that he may be in danger of losing by defects of character. For his hours of coldness he atones by a few minutes of exquisite

dependence; for his long fickleness—giving all his store of charm to a total stranger and keeping ten yards distance between himself and his own—he makes up by falling at the right moment flat at one's feet with his paws in the air, constituting an invitation to scratch and forget that no ordinarily constituted human being can resist.

But probably the biggest gun in the deadly armoury of the Aberdeen is the art of begging. Begging is almost a birthright with an Aberdeen. It is as natural to him as to a hospital; and he knows its power. He knows that masters and mistresses are snobs and like to be begged to: that it is one of our foibles. This he knows, and gains immensely by it. While other dogs are fussily striving to attract attention at the table, and being told to lie down, the Aberdeen is seated quietly at the side of the weakest guest, being plied with delicacies and consuming them without a sound. The quietest Aberdeen that I ever met was at the Dorset Arms at East Grinstead, a pleasant hostelry, with Dr. Johnson's chair from the Essex Head, and signed photographs of Dan Leno, and miles of Ashdown Forest from the coffee-room window. An aged Aberdeen lives, or lived, there, who will sit motionless by your chair for hours if need be, with a look of resigned, almost pious, patience on his countenance. You never see him come in or go out. When you sit down he is not there; but suddenly he is, as still as a ghost, and to all appearances as solidly fixed in his vertical position as the Nelson Column.

• Our little Bobby is learning the same device. No one taught him; but one day, the time having arrived, instead of lying down as heretofore, he subsided naturally on his tail, lifted his fore-paws, and was begging. Straightway we passed utterly into his power, and he perceived it, and now in extreme cases he begs even where there is no meal in progress. For mercy, the superficial observer might think; but that is not so: no Aberdeen

would beg for mercy, being in a position to command it. He begs by instinct—as the simplest way out of his difficulty; and it is so. Begging is merely one of the thousand and one wiles of this fascinating, naughty, incorrigible, and wholly adorable breed.

HER ROYAL 'TUMNAL TINTINESS*

SHE is absurdly small—a homœopathic dose of a dog. Nothing but the folly of Western fashions prevents her being carried in the sleeve, as Nature and Art intended her to be. But she is small only in figure: in all else she is as large as a Newfoundland—in fidelity and courage and spirit and protectiveness and appetite (proportionately), and love of ease—while in brain power she is larger. Although not six months old, she has the gravity of age, she suggests complete mental maturity. If she were ten she could not open an eye upon a superfluous caress with more languor or disdain. Her regality is such that one resorts to all kinds of expedients to win her favour. She has the more radiant merits of the cat—she eats like a cat, with all its meticulous cleanliness and precision, she plays with a cotton-reel like a cat, she has a cat's flexibility in her toilet. On your knee she sinks into complacency like a cat. None the less she is a true dog too, with nearly all the stig-mata of her kind—the black muzzle, the deep stop, the flat forehead, the plumed tail carried high, the bowed legs, the minuteness, the nervous fluid. Her hue is that of a beech leaf in autumn.

When she runs from room to room she beats the floor with her fore-paws with a gallant little

rocking-horse action. When she runs over grass she makes a russet streak like a hare, with the undulating ripple of a sea-serpent, and her soft pads reverberate like muffled hoofs. When she is not running she is asleep. When she sleeps the most comfortable place in the room is hopelessly engaged until she wakes. However fast she may be sleeping, she wakes directly her particular friend leaves the room, her religion being sociability. Left alone she screams. Put out of the house alone, she circumnavigates it with the speed of thought, seeking an open door or window. The sunlight through her tongue is more than rubies.

One difficulty that seems to confront many owners of Pekingese spaniels is the finding of a suitable name; for it should of course be Chinese and also easily pronounceable. But to those who have the honour to possess Professor Giles's "Chinese Biographical Dictionary" the situation is without such complications. Turning over its pages I quickly alighted upon a choice of engaging females whose names might fitly be conferred upon Her Autumn Leafiness. To mention a few, there is A-chiao, who, when a child, was shown to the Emperor Wu Ti, also a child, and he was asked what he thought of her as a possible wife. "Oh," said the boy, "if I could get A-chiao I would have a golden house to keep her in." There is Chao Fie-yen, who was so graceful and light that she was called "Flying Swallow." There is Chao Yün, who died with these words from the "Diamond Lutra" on her lips: "Like a dream, like a vision, like a bubble, like a shadow, like dew, like lightning." There is Ch'i Nu, who had two lovers, one of which lived on the right of the house and other on the left. Her father bade her tuck up the sleeve which corresponded to the man whom she preferred, and she tucked up both, saying that she would like to live with the handsome one and eat with the rich. (This dog is very like that.) There is Féng Hou, one of the favourites

of the Emperor Yüan Ti, who, when a bear escaped, did not flee with all the other ladies, but remained to face the bear, saying: "I was afraid lest some harm should come to Your Majesty's person." There is Hsi Chih, who was never so lovely as when she knitted her brows; and P'an Fei, the favourite of Hsiao Pao-chüan, who said of her, "Every step makes a lily grow!" and Pei Ch'i Kung Chu, who awakened in the breast of her lover such a flame that it set fire to a temple; and Tao Yün, who when her brother likened a snow-storm to salt sprinkled in the air, corrected the feebleness of his simile by comparing it to willow-catkins whirled by the wind; and Ts'ai Luan, who compiled a rhyming dictionary and ascended to heaven with her husband, each on a white tiger. Here, you observe, is a considerable range—although by no means all—for the selecting mind to consider.

The choice fell upon Féng Hou. That is the name to which, since it is hers and she is all caprice and individuality, she refuses to answer.

The dog will come when he is called,
The cat will turn away.

—so wrote an old observer. It is true of dogs and cats, but it is hopelessly amiss of Pekingese. I would amend it thus:

The dog will come when he is called,
The cat will turn away;
The Pekingese will please itself,
Whatever you may say.

For, to adapt an old proverb, where there's a Pekingese there's a will.

I do not think that she is ever likely to be a wonder from the point of view of the bench. At least one of the dreaded penalizations is hers already, and she may acquire others; nothing can make her fit to sit beside her illustrious grandfather, Ch. Chu'erh of Alderbourne, that Napoleon of Pekingese, that

Meredith, that Brummell, all combined ; nor has she the ingratiating pictorial charm of Ch. Broadoak Beetle ; but no one knows what her own children may be like, and meanwhile she is enough for her owner. She has brought into a house hitherto unconscious of it the delectable piquancy of Peking.

Having done all that was possible to make Féng Hou our own, no one in the house having any independent will left, and butcher's bills rising like Grahame White : having done all this, it was something more than a shock to be favoured with a translation of the rhapsodical pearls of wisdom dropped from the lips of her Imperial Majesty Tzu Hsi, the late Dowager Empress of Western China, for the guidance of the master of her kennel. One saw at once how much was still to do if Féng Hou was to be worthy of her race. I quote this most delightful document, the very flower of Chinese solicitude and fancy.

PEARLS DROPPED FROM THE LIPS OF HER IMPERIAL
MAJESTY, TZŪ HSI, DOWAGER EMPRESS OF THE
FLOWERY LAND.

Let the Lion Dog be small : let it wear the swelling cape of dignity around its neck : let it display the billowing standard of pomp above its back.

Let its face be black : let its fore-legs be shaggy : let its forehead be straight and low, like unto the brow of an Imperial righteous harmony boxer.

Let its eyes be large and luminous : let its ears be set like the sails of a war-junk : let its nose be like that of the monkey god of the Hindus.

Let its fore-legs be bent, so that it shall not desire to wander far, or leave the Imperial precincts.

Let its body be shaped like that of a hunting lion spying for its prey.

Let its feet be tufted with plentiful hair that its footfall may be soundless : and for its standard of pomp let it rival the whisk of the Tibetan's yak, which is flourished to protect the Imperial litter from the attacks of flying insects.

Let it be lively that it may afford entertainment by its gambols ; let it be timid that it may not involve itself in

danger ; let it be domestic in its habits that it may live in amity with the other beasts, fishes, or birds that find protection in the Imperial Palace. And for its colour, let it be that of the lion—a golden sable, to be carried in the sleeve of a yellow robe, or the colour of a red bear, or a black or a white bear, or striped like a dragon, so that there may be dogs appropriate to every costume in the Imperial wardrobe.

Let it venerate its ancestors and deposit offerings in the canine cemetery of the Forbidden City on each new moon.

Let it comport itself with dignity ; let it learn to bite the foreign devils instantly.

Let it be dainty in its food that it shall be known for an Imperial dog by its fastidiousness.

Sharks' fins and curlews' livers and the breasts of quails, on these it may be fed ; and for drink give it the tea that is brewed from the spring buds of the shrub that groweth in the province of the Hankow, or the milk of the antelopes that pasture in the Imperial parks. Thus shall it preserve its integrity and self-respect ; and for the day of sickness let it be anointed with the clarified fat of the leg of a sacred leopard, and give it to drink a throstle's egg-shell full of the juice of the custard-apple in which have been dissolved three pinches of shredded rhinoceros horn, and apply to it piebald leeches.

So shall it remain ; but if it die, remember thou, too, art mortal.

That is a very charming poem, is it not ? Queen Victoria drew up no such rules for Dandie Dinmonts, nor did Charles I., so far as I know, thus establish the standard of the little creatures with whose ears he played instead of studying the signs of the times. But it must necessarily strike some apprehension into the breast of the owner of a Pekinese. Is one doing rightly by the dog ? is a question that it forces upon one. In the matter of diet alone I find that we have been all to seek. No house could have been so free from sharks' fins and curlews' livers as this, and if a quail's breast has chanced to enter, it was certainly not Fêng Hou who ate it. As for drink—but I wonder if anyone can recommend me a good, trustworthy antelope milker : one who would not object to help in

the garden when it is not milking-time? Things would be simple then—until Féng Hou was ill. But that does not bear thinking about.

Apropos of medicine, however, an odd thing happened. Féng Hou at first was not always good; indeed she was sometimes extremely naughty; and a little castigating seemed needful. A letter therefore was dispatched to London, to a provider of quaint necessities, asking that some attractive little switch, worthy of such a creature, might be supplied. It came at once—the most delicate and radiant of rods, with a note saying that it was something of a curiosity, being pure rhinoceros horn. So we have one of the ingredients of one of the prescriptions after all! Physic indeed.

THE SCHOOL FOR SYMPATHY*

I HAD heard a great deal about Miss Beam's school, but not till last week did the chance come to visit it.

The cabman drew up at a gate in an old wall, about a mile out of the town. I noticed as I was waiting for him to give me change that the Cathedral spire was visible down the road. I rang the bell, the gate automatically opened, and I found myself in a pleasant garden facing a square red ample Georgian house, with the thick white window-frames that to my eyes always suggest warmth and welcome and stability. There was no one in sight but a girl about twelve, with her eyes covered with a bandage, who was being led carefully between the flower-beds by a little boy of some four years her junior. She stopped, and evidently asked who it was that had come in, and he seemed to be describing me to her. Then they passed on, and I entered the door which a smiling parlour-maid—that pretty sight!—was holding open for me.

Miss Beam was all that I had expected—middle-aged, authoritative, kindly, and understanding. Her hair was beginning to turn grey, and her figure had a fulness likely to be comforting for a homesick child to look upon.

We talked idly for a little while, and then I asked

* *From Old Lamps for New.*

her some questions as to her scholastic methods, which I had heard were simple.

"Well," she said, "we don't as a matter of fact do much teaching here. The children that come to me—small girls and smaller boys—have very few formal lessons: no more than is needful to get application into them, and those only of the simplest—spelling, adding, subtracting, multiplying, writing. The rest is done by reading to them and by illustrated discourses, during which they have to sit still and keep their hands quiet. Practically there are no other lessons at all."

"But I have heard so much," I said, "about the originality of your system."

Miss Beam smiled. "Ah, yes," she said. "I am coming to that. The real aim of this school is not so much to instil thought as thoughtfulness—humanity, citizenship. That is the ideal I have always had, and happily there are parents good enough to trust me to try and put it into execution. Look out of the window a minute, will you?"

I went to the window, which commanded a large garden and playground at the back.

"What do you see?" Miss Beam asked.

"I see some very beautiful grounds," I said, "and a lot of jolly children; but what perplexes me, and pains me too, is to notice that they are not all as healthy and active as I should wish. As I came in I saw one poor little thing being led about owing to some trouble with her eyes, and now I can see two more in the same plight; while there is a girl with a crutch just under the window watching the others at play. She seems to be a hopeless cripple."

Miss Beam laughed. "Oh, no," she said; "she's not lame, really; this is only her lame day. Nor are those others blind; it is only their blind day." I must have looked very much astonished, for she laughed again. "There you have an essential part of our system in a nutshell. In order to get a real appreciation and understanding of misfortune into these young minds we make them participants in

misfortune too. In the course of the term every child has one blind day, one lame day, one deaf day, one maimed day, one dumb day. During the blind day their eyes are bandaged absolutely, and it is a point of honour not to peep. The bandage is put on overnight; they wake blind. This means that they need assistance in everything, and other children are told off to help them and lead them about. It is educative to both of them—the blind and the helpers.

"There is no privation about it," Miss Beam continued. "Everyone is very kind, and it is really something of a joke, although, of course, before the day is over the reality of the affliction must be apparent even to the least thoughtful. The blind day is of course really the worst," she went on, "but some of the children tell me that the dumb day is the most dreaded. There, of course, the child must exercise will-power only, for the mouth is not bandaged. . . . But come down into the garden and see for yourself how the children like it."

Miss Beam led me to one of the bandaged girls, a little merry thing, whose eyes under the folds were, I felt sure, as black as ash-buds. "Here's a gentleman come to talk to you," said Miss Beam, and left us.

"Don't you ever peep?" I asked, by way of an opening.

"Oh no," she exclaimed; "that would be cheating. But I'd no idea it was so awful to be blind. You can't see a thing. One feels one is going to be hit by something every moment. Sitting down's such a relief."

"Are your guides kind to you?" I asked.

"Pretty good. Not so careful as I shall be when it's my turn. Those that have been blind already are the best. It's perfectly ghastly not to see. I wish you'd try!"

"Shall I lead you anywhere?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," she said; "let's go for a little walk. Only you must tell me about things. I shall be so

glad when to-day's over. The other bad days can't be half as bad as this. Having a leg tied up and hopping about on a crutch is almost fun, I guess. Having an arm tied up is a little more troublesome, because you have to get your food cut up for you, and so on ; but it doesn't really matter. And as for being deaf for a day, I shan't mind that—at least, not much. But being blind is so frightening. My head aches all the time, just from dodging things that probably aren't there. Where are we now ? ”

“ In the playground,” I said, “ going towards the house. Miss Beam is walking up and down the terrace with a tall girl.”

“ What has the girl got on ? ” my companion asked.

“ A blue serge skirt and pink blouse.”

“ I think it's Millie,” she said. “ What colour hair ? ”

“ Very light,” I said.

“ Yes, that's Millie. She's the head girl. She's awfully decent.”

“ There's an old man tying up roses,” I said.

“ Yes, that's Peter. He's the gardener. He's hundreds of years old ! ”

“ And here comes a dark girl in red, on crutches.”

“ Yes,” she said ; “ that's Beryl.”

And so we walked on, and in steering this little thing about I discovered that I was ten times more thoughtful already than I had any notion of, and also that the necessity of describing the surroundings to another makes them more interesting.

When Miss Beam came to release me I was quite sorry to go, and said so.

I returned to the town murmuring (inaccurately as ever) the lines :

Can I see another's woe
And not share their sorrow too ?
O no, never can it be,
Never, never, can it be.

DAN AND PAUL*

IN Dan Leno England lost a man of genius whose untimely and melancholy end was yet another reminder that great wits are sure to madness near allied. Not that he was precisely a great wit: rather a great droll; but great within his limits he certainly was, and probably no one has ever caused more laughter or cleaner laughter.

That was, perhaps, Dan Leno's greatest triumph, that the grimy sordid material of the Music Hall low comedian, which, with so many singers, remains grimy and sordid, and perhaps even becomes more grimy and more sordid, in his refining hands became radiant, joyous, a legitimate source of mirth. In its nakedness it was still drunkenness, quarrelsomeness, petty poverty; still hunger, even crime; but such was the native cleanness of this little, eager, sympathetic observer and reader of life, such was his gift of showing the comic, the unexpected, side, that it emerged the most suitable, the gayest joke. He might be said to have been a crucible that transmuted mud to gold.

It was the strangest contrast—the quaint, old-fashioned, half-pathetic figure, dressed in his outlandish garbs, waving his battered umbrella, smashing his impossible hat, revealing the most squalid secrets of the slums; and the resultant effect of light and happiness, laughter irresistible, and yet never for a

* From *A Wanderer in London*.

moment cruel, never *at* anything, but always *with* it. The man was immaculate.

In this childlike simplicity of emotion which he manifested we can probably see the secret of his complete failure in New York. In that sophisticated city his genial elemental raptures seemed trivial. The Americans looked for cynicism, or at least a complete destructive philosophy—such as their own funny men have at their finger-tips—and he gave them humour not too far removed from tears. He gave them fun, that rarest of qualities, rarer far than wit or humour; and, in their own idiom, they had “no use” for it.

In the deserts of pantomime he was comparatively lost: his true place was the stage of a small Music Hall, where he could get on terms with his audience in a moment. Part of his amazing success was his gift of taking you into his confidence. The soul of sympathy himself, he made you sympathetic too. He addressed a Hall as though it were one intimate friend. He told you his farcical troubles as earnestly as an unquiet soul tells its spiritual ones. You had to share them. His perplexities became yours—he gathered you in with his intimate and impressive “Mark you”; and you resigned yourself to be played upon as he would. The bright security of his look told you that he trusted you, that you could not fail him. You shared his ecstasies too; and they were ecstasies!

No matter what Dan did to his face, its air of wistfulness always conquered the pigments. It was the face of a grown-up child rather than a man, with many traces upon it of early struggles. For he began in the poorest way, accompanying his parents as a stroller from town to town, and knowing every vicissitude. This face, with its expression of profound earnestness, pointed his jokes irresistibly. I recollect one song in the patter to which (and latterly his songs were mostly patter) he mentioned a fire-work explosion at home that carried both his parents

through the roof. "I shall always remember it," he said, gravely, while his face lit with triumph and satisfaction, "because it was the only time that father and mother ever went out together." * That is quite a good specimen of his manner, with its hint of pathos underlying the gigantic absurdity.

Irish (of course) by extraction, his real name was George Galvin: he took Leno from his stepfather, and Dan from an inspired misprint. His first triumphs were as a clog-dancer, and he danced superbly to the end, long after his mind was partially gone. But he will be remembered as the sweetest-souled comedian that ever swayed an audience with grotesque nonsense based on natural facts.

But not even Dan Leno was to all tastes, except in the pit and gallery. It is one of the unavoidable blemishes upon the variety that governs a Music Hall entertainment, that there must be a certain section of the audience who have to endure much in order to see a little that they like. Yet there is always something that is worth seeing, always in every Hall, however remote from the centre, one performance of strength or dexterity in which all the supple beauty of the human figure and its triumphs of patience and practice shine out. I would sit through an hour of rubbish (since one may talk and smoke, as one may not in any theatre) for five minutes of such a genius as Paul Cinquevalli; and him the Londoner may see any night when he is in town for sixpence or a shilling and have the honour of applauding the very Shakespeare of equilibrists.

It is impossible to believe that greater skill and precision than Cinquevalli's will ever be attained. For my part I cannot think that we shall ever see accomplishment so great; but even if we do, I feel certain that it will lack the alliance of such charm and distinction. It is not merely that the incomparable Paul can instantly subjugate and endow with life every article of furniture that he touches: that in a moment billiard-balls run over his back like mice,

billiard-cues assume the blind obedience of sheep; it is not only this, but take away his juggling genius and there would still remain a man of compelling, arresting charm, a man visibly and fascinatingly pre-eminent. "Here is a power," one says, immediately his lithe figure enters. "Here is a power." As it happens, he goes on to prove it by neutralising the life-work of Sir Isaac Newton with exquisite grace and lightheartedness; but were he to do nothing at all—were he merely to stand there—one would be conscious of a notable personality none the less.

No one can enjoy watching a good conjuror more than I do—I mean a conjuror who produces things from nothing, not a practitioner with machinery—but a good juggler is even more interesting. The conjuror's hands alone are beautiful, whereas every line and movement of the juggler's body has grace. This at least is so with Cinquevalli. As I watch him Blake's lines keep recurring to me :

"What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?"

Not that Paul is a tiger, or that the words are wholly appropriate; but the law of association is the only one which I never break, and I like to put some of its freakish manifestations on record, especially as fundamentally it always has reason.

I suppose there has never been such mastery over matter as Paul Cinquevalli's. Like the great man and humorous artist that he is, he has deliberately set himself the most difficult tasks; one would have said the insuperable tasks. What, for example, is less tractable than a billiard-ball—a hard, round, polished, elusive thing, full of independence and original sin, that scarcely affords foothold for a fly, and often refuses to obey even John Roberts on a level table? But Cinquevalli will not only balance a billiard-ball on a cue, but will balance another ball on that, and will even run two together, one resting on the other, backwards and forwards between two

parallel cues. This feat I am convinced is as much of a miracle as many of the things in which none of us believe. It is perfectly ridiculous, after seeing it performed by Cinquevalli, to come away with petty little doubts as to the unseen world. Everything has become possible.

With Paul one may use the word "perfection" quite comfortably, without fear of molestation. And I know I am right by an infallible test. Anything perfect moves me in the way that anything pathetic ought to do; and to watch Cinquevalli performing some of his feats is to be wrought upon to a curious and, perhaps, quite comic degree. "You beauty! You beauty!" I have caught myself saying again and again as he conquered one difficulty after another with his charming ease. In talking about Cinquevalli to an artist—and a very level-headed artist, too—after the performance, he said, before I had mentioned this peculiarity of mine, "I must go and see him again. But the odd thing about Cinquevalli is that he always makes me cry." Then I confessed too; for after that I could have no shame in my emotion. Nor, indeed, had I before; for, to quote Blake again:

"A tear is an intellectual thing."

A PHILOSOPHER THAT FAILED *

OF Oliver Edwards, nothing, I believe, is known beyond the fact that he had been at Pembroke College with Dr. Johnson; that he was a solicitor in Barnard's Inn; that he married twice; that he lived on a little farm of sixty acres near Stevenage and came to London twice a week; and that he wore grey clothes and a wig with many curls, and went to church on Good Fridays. We know of Edwards' life only this, and of his speech we have only some dozen sentences; and yet he will live for ever, by virtue of having crossed the stage of literature on one fine morning one hundred and twenty-nine years ago. He might be likened to the bird with which the Venerable Bede compared the life of man in a famous and beautiful passage: the bird that flies out of the dark void into the lighted banquet hall and out again into the void once more. So with Edwards; for sixty years he was not; then he met Dr. Johnson and his Boswell in Butcher Row, and stayed with them for an hour; and then he was not again. But the hour was sufficient: it gave him time to make his one deathless remark. By virtue of that remark he lives, and will live.

Edwards's day was Good Friday, April 17th, 1778—"a delightful day," says Boswell. How little the

* From *Character and Comedy*.

good Edwards can have thought, as he climbed out of his bed in Barnard's Inn that morning and donned his grey clothes and his curly wig, that he was about to become immortal. He spent, I take it, the early hours in his office, reading conveyances or deeds and writing letters; then he went to church, whither Dr. Johnson and Boswell had also gone, to St. Clement's, which through some strange stroke of luck is standing, with the Doctor's pew intact within it, to this dark, irreverent, rebuilding day.

On the way Boswell (who could grow the flower quite easily now, having obtained much seed) remarked that Fleet Street was the most cheerful scene in the world, adding, skilfully as he thought, "Fleet Street is, in my mind, more delightful than Tempe!" The Doctor, however, having the same dislike of the imitator that most teachers and all cynics possess, had his dash of cold water ready. "Ay, ay, but let it be compared with Mull." So they passed on to church, where the Doctor was pleased to see so numerous a congregation.

It was after church that they met Edwards, whom Johnson had not seen for forty years. The recognition came from the lawyer, a talkative, friendly, and not easily daunted man, who thereafter quickly got to work and enlarged to Boswell on the pleasure of living in the country. Boswell, again in the true Johnsonian manner, replied, "I have no notion of this, sir. What you have to entertain you is, I think, exhausted in half an hour." But Edwards was deeper and more sincere. "What," he said, "don't you love to have hope realised? I see my grass, and my corn, and my trees growing. Now, for instance, I am curious to see if this frost has not nipped my fruit trees." Johnson, who had been in a reverie, possibly missing the familiar scent of incense—for, in spite of Boswell's innuendoes to the contrary, Edwards does not appear to have been at all impressed by the magnitude and lustre of his old friend—here remarked, "You find, sir, you have

fears as well as hopes "; and I am glad he did so, for it gave Boswell the opportunity to add the reflection, "So well did he see the whole when another saw but the half of a subject." And yet it is more than likely that Edwards saw the whole too.

Being comfortably seated in the Bolt Court library on this sunny Good Friday, Edwards, who had already commented with delightful bluntness, but perfect innocence, on the Doctor's age, remarked, "Sir, I remember you would not let us say 'prodigious' at college. For even then," he added, turning to Boswell, "he was delicate in language, and we all feared him." Johnson said nothing of this at the time, but to his Boswell said afterwards, in private, "Sir, they respected me for my literature"—meaning by "they" the undergraduates—"and yet it was not great but by comparison. Sir, it is amazing how little literature there is in the world." That was one hundred and thirty-four years ago; and it is amazing still.

The conversation with Edwards then turned to money, and it came out that the lawyer had given much away. He also admitted to a longing to be a parson and live in comfort and comparative idleness. Johnson had an opening here, and took it. "I would rather have Chancery suits upon my hands," he said, "than the care of souls. No, sir, I do not envy a clergyman's life as an easy life, nor do I envy the clergyman who makes it an easy life." Edwards, however, did. There is no evidence that the Doctor convinced him. My impression is that he was never convinced by anyone's arguments. I picture him as the kind of man who goes through life contentedly, secure in his own opinion.

Nothing could daunt Edwards, and so innocent and happy was he that he had no notion he was not observing the strict rules of the game. The rules of the Johnson conversational game made it imperative that you should utter only questions or provocative opinions, and then wait for the answer

and receive it humbly. But Edwards smilingly broke them all. He asked questions, it is true, but long before the Doctor could reply he had volunteered, with appalling hardihood, scraps of autobiography. If there is one thing an autobiographer like Johnson cannot stand it is the autobiography of others. And yet the Doctor, with his great human imagination, knew that Edwards was a pearl of sincerity and candour, and in his heart, I am sure, valued him accordingly. "I have been twice married, Doctor," said Edwards, apropos of nothing, cheerily adding the terrifying sentiment, "You, I suppose, have never known what it was to have a wife?" This—to Johnson! We can see Boswell shivering on his chair's edge. "Sir," said Dr. Johnson, "I have known what it was to have a wife, and [in a solemn, tender, faltering tone] I have known what it was to lose a wife. It had almost broke my heart." Edwards was unabashed. He said instantly, "How do you live, sir?" adding, "For my part, I must have my regular meals and a glass of good wine." Dr. Johnson replied suitably—the kind of reply that would usually settle the matter among his guests—"I now drink no wine, sir. Early in life I drank wine; for many years I drank none. I then for some years drank a great deal." Edwards rose to a fine height of irreverence here, to the immense dismay, I have no doubt, of Boswell, who, with all his advantages, had not been at Pembroke with his hero. He cut in with, "Some hogsheads, I warrant you." The Doctor succeeded in taking no notice (quite possibly he was secretly flattered; we all like to be credited with great deeds), and continued his dull alimentary history; but the victory was Edwards's, for the Doctor, when asked if he ate supper, merely and very uncharacteristically said "No," leaving it for his visitor to remark, with something of the great man's own manner made human, "For my part, now, I consider supper as a turnpike through which one must pass in order to get to bed."

That is good enough ; but it is not the single remark by which Edwards is known—on which his deathless fame rests. That had come earlier. " You are a philosopher, Dr. Johnson," said Edwards. " I have tried, too, in my time to be a philosopher ; but I don't know how ; cheerfulness was always breaking in." That was Edwards's great speech. By virtue of that candid confession he takes his place with the shining company of simple souls, the hierarchy of the ingenuous. It was too much for Boswell, who had no eye for children, young or old. But on repeating it to Mr. Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Mr. Courtenay, Mr. Malone, and, indeed, all the eminent men he knew, they said with one accord that " it was an exquisite trait of character." He therefore refrained from belittling it in the book.

To Boswell's intense relief, Edwards at last went. He had begun by calling Dr. Johnson (who was sixty-nine) old ; he left with another reference to his age. Looking him full in the face, he said, " You'll find in Dr. Young the line,

' O my coevals ! remnants of yourselves.' "

When he was gone, Boswell came to himself again, and quickly remarked that he thought him a weak man ; and the Doctor, smarting under the imputation of senility, was, I regret to say, weak enough to agree. But they were both wrong. Edwards was a strong man—strong in his cheerfulness and his transparency.

ON A BOOKSELLER'S MISTAKE *

I HAVE been shocked and pained and a little outraged by a classified catalogue that reached me this morning from a second-hand bookseller whom I know and esteem; for one of its sections is entitled "Motoring and Coaching." Now here is a treacherous thing on the part of a second-hand bookseller, a confessed champion of what is old and desirable! Could anything be more traitorous to his trust than to group together such irreconcilables, such essential foes, as the mechanical mushroom volumes that motoring has produced and the old leisurely full-flavoured gentlemanly eulogies of the Tantivy Trot?

Motoring and Coaching—how can they be associated? Every pleasant thought that the word coaching brings to the mind—all its rich and mellow connotation—Mr. Pickwick—Nimrod—old prints—the music of the hoofs—*Tom Brown's School Days*—the scent of the horses—Yuba Bill—the crack of the whip—Albert Pell—the notes of the horn, near or far—the bustle of the ostlers—Egerton Warburton's songs—the cobbled yards—John Browdie—the landlord at the door—Jem Selby's ruddy face—the old world and its leisure: all this is dispersed into thin air in a moment by the mere proximity of a car, its

* From *One Day and Another*.

rattles and tremors, its groans and effluvia, its hard materialism and its unrighteous speed.

Who ever had any conversation in a motor-car ? Nor, indeed, is good conversation possible in a train ; but coaches seem to have been full of it inside and out. Listen to this :

" And the Punches," said William. " There's cattle ! A Suffolk Punch, when he's a good 'un, is worth his weight in gold. Did you ever breed any Suffolk Punches yourself, sir ? "

" N—no," I said, " not exactly."

" Here's a gen'lm'n behind me, I'll pound it," said William, " as has bred 'em by wholesale."

The gentleman spoken of was a gentleman with a very unpromising squint, and a prominent chin, who had a tall white hat on with a narrow flat brim, and whose close-fitting drab trousers seemed to button all the way up outside his legs, from his boots to his hips. His chin was cocked over the coachman's shoulder, so near to me that his breath quite tickled the back of my head ; and as I looked round at him, he leered at the leaders with the eye with which he didn't squint, in a very knowing manner.

" Ain't you ? " said William.

" Ain't I what ? " asked the gentleman behind.

" Bred them Suffolk Punches wholesale ? "

" I should think so," said the gentleman. " There ain't no sort of 'orse that I ain't bred, and no sort of dorg. 'Orses and dorgs is some men's fancy. They're wittles and drink to me—lodging, wife, and children—reading, writing, and 'rithmetic—snuff, tobacco, and sleep."

It is scenes like that which bring home to us the loss that we suffer by the disappearance of the coach. For although one meets interesting strangers in railway carriages, and occasionally overhears an odd or humorous conversation or remark, yet there is no real comparison. Characters, apparently so common on the roofs of coaches (and, indeed, inside, for was it not inside a coach that Lamb made his answer to the talkative man who asked what were the prospects of the turnip season : " It depends on the boiled legs of mutton " ?) are now few and far between. Between the coachman and the engine-driver, whether

of train or car, there is also all the difference in the world : one dealing in nerves and muscle and temperament, with " the friend of man " at its most urgent and capable, and the other merely pulling cranks and turning wheels.

That scrap of coach-roof conversation—the last portion of which ought to be cut in letters of gold and placed over the doorways of Tattersall's and Aldridge's (those strongholds of right feeling)—comes of course from Dickens, whose Pegasus, one might say, was a leader or wheeler on the road. Without coaches to amuse and inspire him there would almost have been no Dickens. He loved them—loved everything about them, and was never so happy as when he could fit his characters in them or on them. Do you remember Mr. Pecksniff, during the first stage between Salisbury and London ?

That he might the better feed and cherish that sacred flame of gratitude in his breast, Mr. Pecksniff remarked that he would trouble his eldest daughter, even in this early stage of their journey, for the brandy bottle. And from the narrow neck of that stone vessel, he imbibed a copious refreshment.

" What are we ? " said Mr. Pecksniff, " but coaches ?—Some of us are slow coaches——"

" Goodness, Pa ! " cried Charity.

" Some of us, I say," resumed her parent with increased emphasis, " are slow coaches ; some of us are fast coaches. Our passions are the horses, and rampant animals too——!"

" Really, Pa ! " cried both the daughters at once, " How very unpleasant."

" And rampant animals too ! " repeated Mr. Pecksniff, with so much determination, that he may be said to have exhibited, at that moment, a sort of moral rampancy himself : " and Virtue is the drag. We start from The Mother's Arms and we run to The Dust Shovel."

When he had said this, Mr. Pecksniff, being exhausted, took some further refreshment.

An earlier coach lover was, I find, the unfortunate Prince Lee Boo of the Pelew Islands, who was more attracted by coaches on his brief sojourn in England

than by anything else. Describing his journey from Portsmouth to London, he said, with much liveliness of imagination, that he had been put into a little house which horses ran away with. When he was taken to see Lunardi ascend in his balloon, he said it was a ridiculous mode of travelling, as it could be done so much easier in a coach. He said also, on another occasion, that he preferred riding in a coach to every other conveyance, as it allowed people, he said, an opportunity of talking together. This brings us back to one of the leading indictments of the car—its unsociability. To talk with the driver, at any rate, is impossible. Nicholas Nickleby, will be remembered, talked practically all the way from London to Yorkshire on a freezing winter night. I recently made a similar night journey in a racing-car with only the two front seats, and we said never a word, the driver and I—or if he spoke I did not hear it—between 2 o'clock and 9. Had he been Mr. Weller, now, or William of Yuba, or old Hine of the Brighton coach, father of the best painter the South Downs have had and the hero of a very delightful old-world book called *Round About a Brighton Coach Office*, by another descendant—had he instead been one of these ripe characters with four loyal horses tugging at his arms and beating out the music of the hoofs, how delightful it would have been! Or Mr. Wise, Nimrod's friend, the hero of the Southampton Road, of whom Nimrod tells so good a story. On Mr. Wise's box one day climbed a young gentleman of his acquaintance, who had just entered the Church, and the following dialogue occurred :

Mr. Wise : " Well, Mr. John, so you be got into Orders."

Young Divine : " Why, yes, I am."

Mr. Wise : " All right ; I am glad to hear it, for they tells me that's not quite so easy a job as it used to be. Now, I've known your father many years, and have drove you many a mile, and I want to ask you a bit of a favour : Will you be so good as to explain to me a little bit about that there Trinity ? "

Young Divine : " Why, that is not exactly a subject for a coach-box, Wise, and perhaps I might not make you comprehend it clearly without entering more fully into it."

Mr. Wise : " Why, to tell you the truth, sir, I have thought a good deal myself about that there Trinity, and never could understand it ; but I don't know how it is, I never meets three in a gig that I don't think of it ! "

One is no enemy of the car as a useful adjunct for twentieth-century utilitarianism and progress ; but for me that is its beginning and end. Convenience is its only justification. I will keep business appointments in taxis, and be driven to and from stations in the motor-cars of friends with perfect resignation ; but only from an incorrigible complaisance will I ever again go for what is called a run in a motor-car. They make me cold, they make me blind, they make me nervous (less for myself than for the people in the road), and they make me ashamed. They aggravate the insolence and success of the rich, and they increase the failure (if it be failure) and lowliness of the poor. It gives me no satisfaction to dim with my dust the sweet williams and marigolds of the cottage gardens ; it does not interest or delight me in the least to see old countrymen start, and young children scatter in terror from their play.

" I wonder, reverend sir," said the famous William Hinton to his vicar, " that you voluntarily trust your perishable body to the outside of a vehicle of the soundness of which you know nothing, and suffer yourself to be drawn to and fro by four strange animals of whose temper you are ignorant, driven by a coachman of whose capacity and sobriety you are uninformed." None the less I intend to take a seat on Mr. Vanderbilt's coach just to go to Brighton in a gentlemanly way for once. I have never done it yet. Years ago I used often to see Jem Selby, and I saw him on the very day on which he won his bet by driving from London to Brighton and back under eight hours ; but I never rode with him. It was that drive,

they said, which killed him ; for he caught cold in the strain and excitement of it all—just as poor G. F. Grace was said to have received his death sentence as he waited on the ropes in a state of tense anxiety to catch Bonnor from one of the highest and longest hits ever made.

Yet coaches, I have heard it urged, after dinner, by motorists, when this kind of argument (utterly futile) is in progress—coaches made dust too, and coaches often ran over people. True. But think for a moment of the habits of the coach : the coach passed but twice or four times a day, regularly ; the coach gave a kindly musical notice of its approach ; the coach obeyed laws and was thoughtful.

But of course there is no comparison, and I should not be forcing one were it not for that wretched bookseller's catalogue. It is his fault.

THE COURSE PROVENÇALE *

(A LETTER)

A COURSE PROVENÇALE is merely a muffled version of a bull fight, a bull fight with the tame buttons on, an Easter Monday review instead of a battle ; but if, as a man in this hotel who has seen scores of bull fights in Spain assures me, there is only one moment in the real thing—the entrance of the bull—one can taste that as well at a Course Provençale as at Madrid. I had that moment five times repeated. There are, however, bulls and bulls, and I can never believe that the minute and ingratiating cattle of the Provençale arena are worthy representatives of the noble beasts that too seldom destroy the *toreadors* of Spain. Nevertheless, though the bulls of Provence hardly exceed the stature of a Kerry cow, or the nurse in *Peter Pan*, we had our thrills now and then ; for, as it happens, a very small bull can make a very large bull-fighter run quite as fast as if a herd of buffalo snorted at his heels.

According to the bills ours was to be a *Grande Course Provençale avec le Concours de Pouly fils, Pouly père, et leur quadrille, qui travailleront cinq superbes taureaux*. The company was to consist of the Poullys—*Pouly fils, chef, and Pouly père, sous-chef*,—and of *L'Aiglon, sauteur à la perche, Clarion, banderillo, Saumer, saut périlleux, and Gras, sauteur attaqueur*.

* From *Listener's Lure*.

The performance, the bills also stated, was to begin at three o'clock precisely, and at half-past one Pouly *fil*s, Pouly *père*, and their quadrille, accompanied by a band, were to make a triumphant progress through the town.

I had forgotten this part of the programme, and was therefore the more surprised, on turning a corner after lunch, to come upon two cabs full of bull-fighters, and a waggonette packed to the uttermost with instruments of brass and men blowing them. A bull-fighter in a cab is as bizarre a sight as you need look for, especially in Nîmes, for nothing in Nîmes is so shabby as a cab and nothing so splendid as a bull-fighter. There was also the contrast of size, the Nîmes cab being very small and the Nîmes bull-fighter very large—an enormous fellow, dazzling in scarlet and purple and gold and intensely pink stockings: on this broiling Sunday afternoon a wanton addition to heat that was already almost unsupportable.

The cabs were stationary before the Café du Sport, and the two Poulys and their companions leaned back in their seats and smoked lazily, gathering in homage with bold roving eyes. Young men pressed forward to shake the heroes by the hand; I saw one offer the burning end of his cigarette for L'Aiglon to take a light from, and, the offer being accepted, tremble beneath the honour. It was a great moment.

And yet there was one unhappy being in the huge crowd. Pouly *père* was unhappy, and I felt sorry for him. Pouly *père* wore the look of one who, after years with the key turned, and the chain up, and the bolts shot well home, and untroubled sleep, had heard the younger generation knocking at the door and had perforce opened to it. There was the bitter fact on all the bills:—*Pouly fil*s, *chef*, *Pouly père*, *sous-chef*. We who lead ordinary humdrum English lives, with never a bull from January to December, can have no idea what it must be for a hero of the arena (even the Provençal arena) to find himself

growing old and ceding his triumphs to his son. Pouly père had been *travaillant* bulls while his son was in the cradle. That warm Provençal applause, mingled with full-flavoured Provençal wit, had come to be part of his life, and now—*Pouly fils, chef, Pouly père, sous-chef!* It was probably at his father's ample knee that Pouly fils learned his picturesque profession. Paternal pride no doubt counts for something on the other side; but to be subordinate to one's own son—that must be hard! And Pouly père looked by no means past his prime; he was immense, with a neck that he might have appropriated from the most magnificent of his victims. His eye was bright; his admirers were many. But it was Pouly fils who rode in the first cab and whom the young men were jostling each other to shake by the hand.

After a slight difficulty, based on a misunderstanding of heroic status, concerning the payment for the refreshment of one of the lesser heroes—a hero just on the debatable line between the condition of sometimes paying for oneself and the condition of always being paid for—the procession moved away, to the accompaniment of a too familiar air by Bizet; and the crowd melted into the arena.

I wandered into the arena too; a crumbling relic of the Roman occupation of the Midi, yet, though crumbling, good for hundreds of years still; a beautiful example of the accuracy of the Roman mason's art, with the huge stones, cut to the nicest angles, laid one upon the other without mortar. That was the way to build; the Latin races always understood the art, and understand it still.

By degrees the western half of the arena filled, fathers and mothers and little children in the better seats, and elsewhere soldiers, idlers, and boys. The sun blazed on the white stone of the Roman masons; the sky was intensely blue; the boys whistled the eternal *Carmen*. At three o'clock a bugle sounded, the eastern doors were flung open, and, again to the strains of the Toreador's song, in marched the brave

men. Although they were merely playing at danger, and their adversaries were so trifling and their affectations so absurd, they impressed me strangely. They carried it off, you see, having no self-consciousness, none of that terror of appearing ridiculous which freezes an Englishman. I assure you that when those six glittering figures marched in, with their brilliant cloaks on their shoulders and careless Southern insolence in their mien, I found myself thrilling to a new emotion. Really it was rather splendid.

Right across the arena they came, while the people clamoured and cheered. Then pausing before the daïs, they bowed, and flung their cloaks with a fine abandon to fortunate occupants of the front seats, who (with pride also) spread them over the railing : all except Pouly *fils*—he flung his to the bugler on the daïs. There was a brief lull while they provided themselves with pale pink cloths and took up their places here and there in the arena. The bugle sounded again. The moment was coming.

The spectators stiffened a little (I was conscious of it) all around the building, as a smaller gate at the far end was thrown open. We waited nearly a minute, and then in trotted (trotted !) a blunt-nosed little bull with wide horns and a wandering, inquiring, even ingratiating, eye. If it had only rushed in or paused at the threshold with an air of arrogance, its size would have been a matter apart ; but to trot in and to be no bigger than a St. Bernard ! The pity of it ! It was as though one had seen with one's own eyes the mountain bring forth the mouse.

Pouly *père*, however, was above such regrets. One course and one only lies open to that simple mind when a bull enters an arena ; he has to perform a particular feat of his own, of which his son shall never deprive him. No sooner was the bull well in the midst than Pouly *père* prepared for his achievement. He seized a long pole, striped like a barber's, and hurried to meet the bull. Not divining his odd

intention, "Do they harry them with poles?" I asked myself. But no; Pouly *père's* purpose was more original, more pacific. Having shouted sufficiently to annoy and attract the bull, he awaited its rush upon him, and then, as it reached him, grounded the pole, leaped lightly over its charging body, and fled to the barricade, a figure of delight and triumph. The spectators cheered to the full, and Pouly *père*, quivering with satisfaction, bowed to us all. He had performed his great feat; he had drawn first applause; he was not so old, so useless, after all.

The real business now began. One after the other the members of the *quadrille* waved cloths in the bull's face, and, running backwards as he charged, lured him right to the barricade, which they then vaulted, leaving him enraged and bewildered on the other side. If only the hint could be communicated to these little creatures that if they ran straight they would get the man! But waver they will, following always the divagations of the cloth; and therein lie the man's advantage and safety. The Course was like that all the time: furious but unsustained and impotent charges on the part of the bulls, and continual and sometimes quite unjustifiable leaps over the barrier on the part of the heroes. The irritation of the bulls was very trivial; they were not hurt at all, and little harm was done. The whole Humane Society might visit the spectacle *en bloc* and be untroubled by the discomfiture of the bull, although the impact of the entertainment on themselves might perhaps provide material for reflection. In the South, however, the effect of spectacles on the spectator is not a prominent subject for thought.

To return to the bulls' injuries—beyond two fugitive pricks as the *bandelliras* entered their shoulders, and one more when the ribbon was momentarily fixed between them, they were not asked to suffer, except in dignity; and they made six fat men perform sufficient feats of activity to adjust the balance. Pouly *fils* was by far the most capable of the

company: his eye was steadier, his nerve stronger, he jumped the barricade as seldom as possible. Indeed, now and then, as he stood with firmly planted feet in the middle of the arena, avoiding the rushes of the bull merely by movements of his body, it was impossible not to admire him. I shall never forget his expression of triumphant content, and the proud controlling gesture with which he raised his left hand on the completion of each feat, the *artist's* signal to the spectators to take him at his own valuation.

Pouly *fils* reserved to himself the right of all the most dramatic moments; but the pole-jump—that he left to his father. There were five bulls altogether, and Pouly *père* jumped over all. But I fear that a touch of ridicule (which possibly he did not perceive—I hope not—) crept into the applause as he descended to earth after his fifth flight. Yet a slight compensation came to him. At the end a little body of roughs laid hands on Pouly *fils* to carry him from the arena in what was intended to be a conquering march, but which, owing to defective handling, was merely uncomfortable for Pouly and grotesque to everyone else. Pouly *père*, stepping mincingly behind (compelled to a short step by the air from *Car-men*), watched his son's struggles with a saturnine expression which I seemed to understand. As one grows older it is the more easy to find oneself on the side of the fathers.

BENIGNUS AND THE FLOR FINAS *

IN one of the prettiest of Katharine Tynan's poems; all of which have some of the freshness of an April morning, there is told the story of Brother Benignus and his bargain with the blackbirds. It was arranged that if the blackbirds abstained from eating the Abbot's cherries and youngling peas a steady supply of corn and manchet ends and marrowy bones should be supplied to them all the year round; and the compact was kept honourably on both sides.

I thought of this poem (which was amongst those which one used to cut out of the *Pall Mall Gazette* once or twice a week in the old days, and wonder who wrote them, and put aside)—I thought of this poem on Monday last, when, in one of the many intervals of rain in a village cricket-match, I was led away by a neighbour to look at his garden. It was one of the dark gardens, which have a charm of their own at least equal in certain moods to that of the riotous herbaceous variety: a garden of soft turf and shrubberies.

As we walked in the rain between box and yew hedges, my friend stopped every now and then to show me a nest—a wagtail's here, a chaffinch's there, a bullfinch's, two flycatchers', a jenny wren's, and so forth—all of which were occupied by young birds, or

* From *Fireside and Sunshine*.

had been until a day or so ago, and all of which he had been in the habit of visiting regularly ever since the building site had first been decided upon. One of the flycatchers was in a nest that she had erected the previous year, and had now returned to and repaired for her new family. So well did she know her landlord that she did not trouble to leave her eggs, but allowed his hand to take her off and replace her—an act which set me wondering if, with the best feelings in the world towards her and her kind, I should ever be trusted in the same way. The gulf between a man and a little garden bird is extraordinarily difficult to bridge, but here was one who had bridged it. To possess a gentle friendliness for birds is not, I take it, enough; one must have something more than that: just that added something which the birds by a subtle sympathy instantly recognise.

Passing on to the drive, we stopped before one of those fantastic and too-symmetrical trees which simple folk call monkey puzzlers but the learned *araucarias*, and I was here shown an object on the trunk about six feet from the ground, and asked what I thought it was. The answer was obvious enough: it was a cigar-box with a hole in it about the size of half-a-crown; I could read *Flor Fina* on it in the familiar stencilling of Cuba. "And supposing," Benignus continued, "I said that there were thirteen young birds in it, what would you say?" This being the kind of question which requires no answer but patience, I said nothing, while he unhooked the box and brought it out to me in the drive. His words were true enough: there at the bottom was a mass of quivering green and blue life amid moss and wool, representing, as he assured me, thirteen titmice; but why one should say thirteen any more than thirty I could not see, so inextricably corporate was this palpitating community, surely the most united and most uncountable family in the world. How the operations of individual feeding and care can go on

in the recesses of that dark and circumscribed cavity is one of the miracles ; but they do. Each child had received proper attention, and in a day or so all will be free, emerging through the hole no bigger than half-a-crown into this perilous world of cats and hawks, catapults and guns. Long may they survive!

But what an odd destiny for the cigar-boxes of Havana ! I hope that some author of the children's books or school readers that are used in Cuba has heard of this pretty English habit, for it is a habit (and Dutch too : I saw several cigar-box nests on fir trees in the gardens near Haarlem last year), because it should add a good deal of interest to the monotony of the manufacture of those articles when the young Cubans become men and box-makers.

We examined another of the model dwellings, which had only three little birds in it, and another in which the eggs were still to hatch, the mother so valuing her time upon them as to refuse to leave, although the box was unhooked, carried some feet, and opened in the broad light. There she sat quite unconcerned, knowing in her brave but infinitesimal heart that a gentleman who gives birds free lodgings can have no sinister intent. I asked Benignus if he thought that he suffered at all in his kitchen garden and orchard from his tolerance of what all the ordinary country-people that I know consider a nuisance of some magnitude—even to offering a penny a nest to the children as an inducement to get them taken. He said he did not think he could complain ; and, at any rate, a song was worth paying for. He said also that he thought that birds, like tramps, have signs by which they indicate to other birds that a garden is a sanctuary. It is a pretty thought, and some day in the early spring next year I hope, as I pass his little estate, to have the luck to observe a tit laboriously and mysteriously tracing with her beak, on one of those smooth red surfaces on the

trunk of a Scotch fir, the cabalistic signs which shall convey to other and strange tits the welcome tidings that this is the kind of man who knows what to do with the box when he has smoked the last of his cigars.

LONDON MYSTERIOUS*

TO artists the fog is London's best friend. Not the black fog, but the other. For there are two distinct London fogs—the fog that chokes and blinds, and the fog that shrouds. The fog that enters into every corner of the house and coats all the metal work with a dark slime, and sets us coughing and rubbing our eyes—for that there is nothing to say. It brings with it too much dirt, too much unhealthiness, for any kind of welcome to be possible. “Hell is a city much like London” I quoted to myself in one of the last of such fogs, as I groped by the railings of the Park in the Bayswater Road. The traffic, which I could not see, was rumbling past, and every now and then a man, close by but invisible, would call out a word of warning, or some one would ask in startled tones where he was. The hellishness of it consisted in being of life and yet not in it—a stranger in a muffled land. It is bad enough for ordinary wayfarers in such a fog as that; but one has only to imagine what it is to be in charge of a horse and cart, to see how much worse one's lot might be.

But the other fog—the fog that veils but does not obliterate, the fog that softens but does not soil, the fog whose beautifying properties Whistler may be said to have discovered—that can be a delight and a joy. Seen through this gentle mist London becomes a city of romance. All that is ugly and hard in

* From *A Wanderer in London*.

her architecture, all that is dingy and repellent in her colour, disappears. "Poor buildings," wrote Whistler, who watched their transformation so often from his Chelsea home, "lose themselves in the dim sky, and the tall chimneys become *campanili*, and the warehouses are palaces in the night, and the whole city hangs in the heavens."

It was Dickens who discovered the London of eccentricity, London as the abode of the odd and the quaint, and Stevenson who discovered London as a home of romance. Whistler discovered London as a city of fugitive, mysterious beauty. For decades the London fog had been a theme for vituperation and sarcasm: it needed this sensitive American-Parisian to show us that what to the commonplace man was a foe and a matter for rage, to the artist was a friend. Every one knows about it now.

Fogs have never been quite the same to me since I was shown a huge chimney on the south side of the Thames, and was told that it belonged to the furnaces that supply London offices with electric light; and that whenever the weather seems to suggest a fog, a man is sent to the top of this chimney to look down the river and give notice of the first signs of the enemy rolling up. Then, as his news is communicated, the furnaces are re-stoked, and extra pressure is obtained that the coming darkness may be fought and the work of counting-houses not interrupted. All sentinels, all men on the look-out, belong to romance; and from his great height this man peering over the river shipping and the myriad roofs for a thickening of the horizon has touched even a black London fog with romance for me. I think of his straining eyes, his call of warning, those roaring fires. . . .

A CHAIR AT THE CAFÉ DE LA PAIX*

AND now since it is the "green hour"—since it is five o'clock—let us take a chair outside the Café de la Paix and watch the people pass, and meditate, here, in the centre of the civilized world, on this wonderful city of Paris and this wonderful country of France.

I am not sure but that when all is said it is not these outdoor *café* chairs of Paris that give it its highest charm and divide it from London with the greatest emphasis. There are three reasons why one cannot sit out in this way in London: the city is too dirty; the air is rarely warm enough; and the pavements are too narrow. But in Paris, which enjoys the steadier climate of a continent and understands the æsthetic uses of a pavement, and burns wood, charcoal or anthracite, it is, when dry, always possible; and I, for one, rejoice in the privilege. This "green hour"—this quiet recess between five and six in which to sip an *apéritif*, and talk, and watch the world, and anticipate a good dinner—is as characteristically French as the absence of it is characteristically English. The English can sip their beverages too, but how different is the bar at which they stand from the comfortable stalls (so to speak)

* From *A Wanderer in Paris*.

in the open-air theatres of the Boulevards in which the French take their ease.

At every turn one is reminded that these people live as if the happiness of this life were the only important thing ; while if we subtract a frivolous fringe, it may be said of the English that (without any noticeable gain in such advantages as spirituality confers) they are always preparing to be happy but have not yet enough money or are otherwise not yet quite ready to begin. The Frenchman is happy now : the Englishman will be happy to-morrow. (That is, at home ; yet I have seen Englishmen in Paris gathering honey while they might, with both hands.)

But the French and English, London and Paris, are not really to be compared. London and Paris indeed are different in almost every respect, as the capitals of two totally and almost inimically different nations must be. For a few days the Englishman is apt to think that Paris has all the advantages ; but that is because he is on a holiday : he soon comes to realize that London is his home, London knows his needs and supplies them. Much as I delight in Paris I would make almost any sacrifice rather than live there ; yet so long as inclination is one's only master, how pleasant are her vivacity and charm. But comparisons between nations are idle. For a Frenchman there is no country like France and no city like Paris ; for an Englishman England is the best country and London the most desirable city. For a short holiday for an Englishman, Paris is a little paradise ; for a short holiday for a Frenchman, London is a little inferno.

Each country is the best ; each country has advantages over the other, each country has limitations. The French may have wide streets and spacious vistas, but their matches are costly and won't light ; the English, even in the heart of London, may be contented with narrow and muddy and congested lanes, but their sugar at least is sweet. The French may have abolished bookmakers from

their race-courses and may give even a cabman a clean napkin to his meals, but their tobacco is a monopoly. The English may fill their streets with newspaper posters advertising horrors and scandals; but they are permitted now and then to forget their vile bodies. The French may piously and prettily erect statues of every illustrious child of the State, but their billiard tables are without pockets.

London may be in darkness for most of the winter and be rained upon by soot all the year round; but at any rate the Londoner is master in his own house or flat and not the cringing victim of a *concierge*, as every Parisian is. That is something to remember and be thankful for. Paris has an atmosphere, and a climate, and Marenne oysters, and attentive waiters; and a cab to every six yards of the kerb, and no petty licensing tyrannies, and the Champs-Élysées, and immunity from lurid newspaper posters, and good coffee, and the Winged Victory, and Voisine; but it also has the *concierge*. At the entrance to every house is this inquisitive censorious janitor—a blend in human shape of Cerberus and the Recording Angel. The *concierge* knows the time you go out and (more serious) the time you come in; what letters and parcels you receive; what visitors, and how long they stay. The *concierge* knows how much rent you pay and what you eat and drink. And the worst of it is that since the *concierge* keeps the door and dominates the house you must put a good face on it or you will lose very heavily. Scowl at the *concierge* and your life will become a harassment: letters will be lost; parcels will be delayed; visitors will be told you are at home; a thousand little vexations will occur. The *concierge* in short is a rod which, you will observe, it is well to kiss. The wise Parisian therefore is always amiable, and generous too, although in his heart he wishes the whole system at the devil.

The French and the English base life on such different premises. To put the case in a nutshell,

we may say that the French welcome facts and the English avoid them. The French make the most of facts; the English persuade themselves that facts are not there. The French write books and plays about facts, and read and go to the theatre to see facts; the English write books and plays about sentimental unreality, and read and go to the theatre in order to be diverted from facts. The French live quietly and resignedly at home among facts; the English exhaust themselves in games and travel and frivolity and social inquisitiveness, in order to forget that they have facts in their midst.

One always used to think that the English were the most willing endurers of impositions and monopolies; but I have come to the conclusion that a people that can continue to burn French matches and use French ink and blotting-paper, bend before the *concierge* and suffer the *claque* and the French theatre attendant, must be even weaker. Only a people in love with slavery would continue to endure the black bombazined harpies who turn the French theatres into infernos, first by their very presence and secondly by their clamour for a *bénéfice*. They do nothing and they levy a tax on it. So far from exterminating them, this absurd lenient French people has even allowed them to dominate the cinematoscope halls which are now so numerous all over Paris. I sit and watch them and wonder what they do all day: in what dark corner of the city they hang like bats till the evening arrives and they are free to poison the air of the theatres and exact their iniquitous secret commission. The habit of London managers to charge sixpence for a programme—an advertisement of his wares such as every decent and courteous tradesman is proud to give away—is sufficiently monstrous: but I can never enough honour them for excluding these *bénéfice* hunters.

Whatever may be said of French acting and French plays there is no doubt that our theatres are more comfortable and better managed. A Frenchman

visiting a theatre in London has no difficulties: he buys his seat at the office, is shown to it, and the matter ends. An Englishman visiting a theatre in Paris has no such ease. He must first buy his ticket (and let him scrutinize the change with some care and dispatch): this ticket, however, does not, as in London, carry the number of his seat: it is merely a card of introduction to the three gentleman in evening dress and tall hats who sit side by side in a kind of pulpit in the lobby. One of them takes his ticket, another consults a plan and writes a number on it, and the third hands it back. Another difficulty has yet to come, for now begins the turn of the harpies. Why the English custom is not followed, and a clean sweep made of both the men in the pulpit and the women inside, one has no notion; for in addition to being a nuisance they must reduce the profits.

I mentioned the *claque* just now. That is another of the Frenchman's darling bugbears which the English would never stand. Every Frenchman to whom I have spoken about it shares my view that it is an abomination, but when I ask why it is not abolished he merely shrugs his shoulders. "Why should it be?—one can endure it," is the attitude; and that indeed is the Frenchman's attitude to most of the things that he finds objectionable. They are, after all, only trimmings; the real fabric of his life is not injured by them; therefore let them go on. Yet while one can understand the persistence of certain Parisian defects, the long life of the *claque* remains a mystery. Upon me the periodical and mechanical explosions of this body of hirelings have an effect little short of infuriation. One is told that the actors are responsible rather than the managers, and this makes its continuance the more unreasonable, for the result has been that in their efforts to acquire the illusion of applause, they have lost the real thing. French audiences rarely clap any more.

When it comes to the consideration of the French stage, there is again no point in making comparisons.

It is again a conflict of fact and sentiment. The French are intensely interested in the manifestations of the sexual emotion, and they have no objection to see the calamities and embarrassments and humours to which it may lead worked out frankly on the boards or in literature: hence a certain sameness in their plays and novels. The majority of the English still think that physical matters should be hidden: hence our dramatists and novelists having had to find other themes, adventure, eccentricity and character have won their predominant place. That is all there is to it. The French stage is the best—to a Frenchman or a gallicized Englishman; the English stage is the best—to the English. The English go rather to see; the French to hear. In other words a blind Frenchman would be better pleased with his national stage than a blind Englishman with his. The blind Frenchman would at any rate not miss the jokes, which, though he knew them all before, he could not resist; whereas the Englishman would be deprived of the visible touches by which the *personæ* of our drama are largely built up. In a drama of passion, whether treated seriously or lightly, words necessarily are more than idiosyncrasies.

In the Paris music halls the comic singers merely sing—they have little but words to give. London music hall audiences may have an undue affection for red noses and sordid domestic details; but they do expect a little character, even if it is coarse character, during the evening, and they get it. There is little in the French hall. Personality is discouraged here; richness, quaintness, unction, irresponsibility, eccentricity—such gifts as once pleased us in Dan Leno and now are to be found in a lesser degree but very agreeably in Wilkie Bard—are superfluities to a French comic singer. All that is asked of him is that he shall be active, shall have a resonant voice, and shall commit to memory a sufficient number of cynical reflections on life. A gramophone producing any rapid indecent song would please the

French more than a hundred Harry Lauders. (And yet when all is said it must be far easier to live in a country where decency, as we understand and painfully cultivate it, has not everywhere to be considered. The life at any rate of the French author, publisher, editor and magistrate, to name no others, is immensely simplified.)

The stream of people continues to be incessant and of incredible density—all walking at the same pace, all talking as only the French can talk, rich and poor equally owners of the pavement. Now and then a *camelot* offers a toy or a picture postcard; boys bring "*La Patrie*" or "*La Presse*"; a performer bends and twists a piece of felt into every shape of hat, culminating in Napoleon's famous *chapeau à cornes*. . . .

One thing that one notices is the absence of laughter. The French laugh aloud very seldom. Even in their theatres, at the richest French jokes, their approval is expressed rather in a rippling murmur counterfeiting surprise than a laugh. Animation one sees, but on these Boulevards behind that is often a suggestion of anxiety. The dominant type of face seen from a chair at the Café de la Paix is not a happy one. . . .

It is when one watches this restless moving crowd, or the complacent audiences at the farces, or the diners in restaurants eating as if it were the last meal, and when one looks week after week at the comic papers of Paris, with their deadly insistence on the one and apparently only concern of Parisian life, that one has most of all to remind oneself that these people are not the French, and that one is a superficial tourist in danger of acquiring very wrong impressions. This is the fringe, the froth.* One has only to remember a very few of these things we have seen in Paris to realize the truth of this. Never was a harder working people. Look at the early hours that Paris keeps, contrast them with London's slovenly awakening. Look at the amazing productivity of a notoriously

idle and careless set—the artists: the old Salon with its miles of pictures twice a year, and the other Salons, hardly less crowded, and the minor exhibitions too. Look at the industry of the Paris stage: the new plays that are produced every week, involving endless rehearsals day and night. Look at the energy of the French authors, dramatic as well as narrative, of the journalists and printers. Think of the engineers, the motor-car manufacturers, the gardeners and the vintners. Think of the bottle-makers. (But one cannot: such a thought causes the head to reel in this city of bottles.) No, we are not seeing France, we foreign visitors to “the gay capital.” Don’t let us labour under any such mistake. The industrious level-headed, cheerful French people do not exhibit themselves to the scrutinizing eyes of the Café de la Paix, do not spend all their time as *Le Rire* would have us believe, do not over-eat and over-drink.

Around and about one all the time, as one watches this panorama, the swift and capable waiters are busy. Every one carries away from Paris one mastering impression upon the inward eye: I am not sure that mine is not a blur of waiters in their long white aprons. At the Paris Exhibition of 1900, over the principal entrance at the south-west corner of the Place de la Concorde, was the gigantic figure of a young and fashionable woman in the very heyday of her vivacity, allurements and smartness. She personified Paris. But not so would I symbolize that city. In any coat of arms of Paris that I designed would certainly be a capable young woman, but also a waiter, sleek, attentive and sympathetic.

Paris may be a city of feminine charm and domination; but to the ordinary foreigner, and especially the Englishman, it is far more a city of waiters. Women we have in England too: but waiters we have not. There are waiters in London, no doubt, but that is the end of them: there are to all intents and purposes, no waiters in the provinces, where we

eat exclusively in our own houses. And even in London we must brace ourselves to find such waiters as there are: we must indulge in heroic feats of patience, and, once the waiter comes into view, exercise most of the vocal organs to attract his notice and obtain his suffrages. In other words, there is in London perhaps one waiter to every five thousand persons; whereas in Paris there are five thousand waiters, more or less, to every one person. Or so it seems. It is a city of waiters; it is *the* city of waiters.

Still the people stream by, and one wonders whence the idea comes that the French are a particularly small race. It is not true. Look at that tall *boulevardier* with some one else's hat (why do so many Frenchmen seem to be wearing other men's hats?) and the immense beard. Look at those two long-haired artists from the Latin Quarter, in velvet clothes and black sombreros. In England they would be stared at and laughed at; but here no one is laughed at at all, and only the women are stared at. It is interesting to note how little street ridicule there is in France. The Frenchman mocks, but he does not, as I think so many of the English do, search for the ridiculous; or at any rate it is not the same kind of ridiculousness that we pillory. In England we bring such sandpaper of prejudice and public opinion to bear upon eccentricity that every one becomes smooth and ordinary—like every one else. But in France—to the superficial observer, at any rate—individuality is encouraged and nourished; in France either no one is ridiculous or every one is.

Some one once remarked to me that never in Paris do you see a woman with any touch of the woods. It is true. The Parisian women suggest the boudoir, the theatre, the salon, the sewing-room, the kitchen, and now and then even the fields; but never the woods. . . .

One misses also in Paris the boy of from fifteen to eighteen. Younger boys there are, and young men abound, but youths of that age one does not much

see; and very rarely indeed a father and son together. In fact the generations seem to mix very little: in the restaurants men of the same age are usually together: beards lunch with beards. . . .

The cabmen! My impression now is, writing here in England, that the Paris *cochers* are all exactly alike. They have white hats and blue coats and bad horses and black moustaches, and their backs entirely fill the landscape. They beat their horses and shout at them all the time. One seldom sees an accident, although they never look as if they were going to avoid one. That is partly because they are a weary and cynical folk, and partly because in France the roads belong to vehicles, and not, as in England, to foot-passengers. In England if you are run over, you can prosecute the driver and get damages; in France if you are run over, the driver (one has always heard) can prosecute you for being in the way.

No matter with what fervour is the *entente* fostered and nourished, the Parisian cabman will see to it that the hatchet is never too deeply interred, that the radical excrescences are not too smoothly planed. Polite hotel managers, obsequious *restaurateurs*, smiling *sommeliers* and irradiated shopkeepers may do their best to assure the Anglo-Saxon that he is among a people that exist merely to do him honour and adore his personality; but directly he hails a cab he knows better. The truth is then his. Not that the Parisian *cocher* hates a foreigner. Nothing so crude as that. He merely is possessed by a devil of contempt that prompts him to humiliate and confound us. To begin with he will not appear to want you as a fare; he will make it a favour to drive you at all. He will then begin his policy of humorous pinpricks. Though you speak with the accent of Mounet-Sully himself, he will force you to pronounce the name of your destination not once but many times, and then very likely he will drive you somewhere else first. You may step into his cab with a feeling that Paris is becoming a native city: you

will emerge wishing it at the bottom of the sea. That is the *cocher's* special mission in life—subtly and insidiously to humiliate the tourist. He does it like an artist and as an artist—for his own pleasure. It is the only compensation that his dreary life carries.

The French, I fancy, are not less capable of stupidity than any other people. There is an idea current that they are the most intelligent of races, but I believe this to be a fallacy, proceeding from the fact that the French language lends itself to epigrammatic expression, and that every French child dips his cup into the common reservoir of engaging idioms and adroit phrases. This means that French conversation, even among the humblest, is better than English conversation under similar and far more favourable conditions; but it does not necessarily mean any more. The incapacity of the ordinary Frenchman to get enough imagination into his ear (so fine that it can distinguish between the most delicate vowel sounds in his own language) to enable it to understand a foreign pronunciation is partly a proof of this. But take him at any time off his regular lines, present a new idea to him, and he can be as stupid as a Sussex farm labourer. It is the same with America. Just as the French language imposes wit on its user, so is every American, man or woman, fitted at birth with the mechanism of humour. Yet how few are humorous!

But the *cocher* is not the only cabman of Paris; there remains the driver of the *auto*. The motor cab has not elbowed out the horse cab in Paris as it has in London, nor probably will it, for the Parisians are not in a hurry; but for Longchamp and such excursions the *auto* is indispensable, and the motor cabman becomes more and more a characteristic of the streets. Our London *chauffeurs* are sufficiently implacable, blunt and churlish, but the Parisian *chauffeur* is like fate. There is no escape if you enter his car: he lights his cigarette, sinks his back into his seat, and his shoulders into his back, and his head into his

shoulders, and drives like the devil. He seems to have no life of his own at all: he exists merely to urge his car wherever he is told. The foreigner has no hold whatever upon the *chauffeur*; he arranges the meter to whatever tariff he pleases, and before you can examine the dial at the end of the journey he has jerked up the flag. When you keep him waiting his meter devours your substance. Always terrible, he is worst in winter, when he is dressed entirely in hearth-rugs. The old *cocher* for me.

To me Paris means a relief of tension. I feel that at last I really am among a democracy. The poor are making no obeisance to the rich; the rich are free from many of the foolish shackles which they forge for themselves with us. The most splendid *jeune homme doré*, for example, may wear a round hat with his evening dress and excite no criticism. I am in short at liberty. Live and let live is the order of the day. Were I to settle here I am aware that I should quickly find almost as restricted conditions as in England and little less neighbourly scrutiny and disapproval. But I am merely a wanderer in Paris, and intend never to be anything else. For such it is the perfect city.

THE DINNER PARTY*

[The dinner party was at Mr. Wynne's, the father of Naomi, whom Kent Falconer, the narrator of *Over Bemerton's*, marries. Mr. Dabney was a Radical editor. Lionel is a county cricketer.]

WHEN the evening arrived, it looked as though Grandmamma and Mr. Dabney were going to hit it off perfectly, and I began to feel quite happy about my introduction of this firebrand into the household.

"I hear that you are a writer," Grandmamma began, very graciously. "I always like literary company. Years ago I met both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

I saw the lid of Lionel's left eye droop as he glanced at Naomi. Mrs. Wynne, I gathered, was employing a favourite opening.

Mr. Dabney expressed interest.

"There are no books like theirs now," Grandmamma continued. "I don't know what kind of books you write, but there are no books like those of Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Mr. Dabney began to say something.

"Personally," Grandmamma hurried on, "I prefer those of Mr. Dickens, but that perhaps is because me dear fawther used to read them to us aloud. He was a beautiful reader. There is no reading aloud

* From *Over Bemerton's*.

to-day, Mr. Dabney ; and, I fear, very little home life."

Here Grandmamma made a false move, and let her companion in, for he could never resist a comparison of the present and the past, to the detriment of the present.

" No," he said, " you are quite right." And such was the tension that Grandmamma's remarks had caused that the whole room was silent for him. " We are losing our hold on all that is most precious. Take London at this moment—look at the scores and scores of attractions to induce people to leave home in the evenings and break up the family circle—restaurants, concert rooms, entertainments, theatres. Look at the music halls. Do you know how many music halls there are in London and Greater London at this moment ? "

" No," said Grandmamma sternly, " I have no notion. I have never entered one."

Lionel shot a glance at me which distinctly said, in his own deplorable idiom, " What price Alf Pinto ? "

Mr. Dabney, I regret to say, intercepted the tail of it, and suddenly realised that he was straying from the wiser path of the passive listener. So he remarked, " Of course not," and brought the conversation back to Boz.

" Mr. Dickens," said Grandmamma, " did me the honour to converse with me in Manchester in the 'sixties. I was there with me dear husband on business, and we stayed in the same hotel as Mr. Dickens, and breakfasted at the same table. The toast was not good, and Mr. Dickens, I remember, compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust. It was a perfect simile. He was very droll. What particularly struck me about him was his eye—so bright and restless—and his quick ways. He seemed all nerves. In the course of our conversation I to'd him I had met Mr. Thackeray, but he was not interested. I remember another thing he said. In paying his bill he gave the waiter a very generous

tip, which was the slang word with which me dear husband always used to describe a *douceur*. 'There,' Mr. Dickens said, as he gave it to the waiter, 'that's ——' How very stupid! I have forgotten what he said, but it was full of wit. 'There,' he said—— Dear me!"

"Never mind, Grandmamma," said Naomi; "you will think of it presently."

"But it was so droll and clever," said the old lady. "Surely, Alderley, dear, I have told you of it?"

"Oh yes, mother, many times," said Alderley; "but I can't for the life of me think of it at the moment. Strange, isn't it," he remarked to us all at large, "how often the loss of memory in one person seems to infect others?—one forgets and all forget. We had a case in Chambers the other day."

Their father's stories having no particular sting in them, his children abandoned him to their mother, who listens devotedly, and we again fell into couples.

But it was useless to attempt disregard of old Mrs. Wynne. There was a feeling in the air that trouble lay ahead, and we all reserved one ear for her.

"And Mr. Thackeray?"—Mr. Dabney asked; with an appearance of the deepest interest.

"Mr. Thackeray," said Grandmamma, "I had met in London some years before. It was at a conversation at the Royal Society's. Mr. Wynne and I were leaving at the same time as the great man,—and however you may consider his writings he was great physically,—and there was a little confusion about the cab. Mr. Thackeray thought it was his, and we thought it was ours. Me dear husband, who was the soul of courtesy, pressed him to take it; but Mr. Thackeray gave way, with the most charming bow to me. It was raining. A very tall man with a broad and kindly face—although capable of showing satire—and gold spectacles. He gave me a charming bow, and said, 'There will be another one for me directly.' I hope there was, for it was raining.

Those were, however, his exact words : ' There will be another one for me directly. ' "

Mr. Dabney expressed himself in suitable terms, and cast a swift glance at his hostess on his other side, as if seeking for relief. She was talking, as it happened, about a novel of the day in which little but the marital relation is discussed, and Mr. Dabney, on being drawn into the discussion, remarked sententiously, " The trouble with marriage is that while every woman is at heart a mother, every man is at heart a bachelor. "

" What was that ? " said Grandmamma, who is not really deaf, but when in a tight place likes to gain time by this harmless imposition. " What did Mr. Dabney say ? " she repeated, appealing to Naomi.

Poor Mr. Dabney turned scarlet. To a mind of almost mischievous fearlessness is allied a shrinking sensitiveness and distaste for prominence of any kind, especially among people whom he does not know well.

" Oh, it was nothing, nothing, " he said. " Merely a chance remark. "

" I don't agree with you, " replied Grandmamma severely, thus giving away her little ruse. " There is no trouble with marriage. It is very distressing to me to find this new attitude with regard to that state. When I was a girl we neither talked about incompatibility and temperament and all the rest of it, nor thought about them. We married. I have had to give up my library subscription entirely because they send me nothing nowadays but nauseous novels about husbands and wives who cannot get on together. I hope, " she added, turning swiftly to Mr. Dabney, " that those are not the kind of books that you write. "

" Oh no, " said Mr. Dabney, " I don't write books at all. "

" Not write books at all ? " said Grandmamma. " I understood you were an author. "

" No, dear, " said Naomi, " not an author. Mr.

Dabney is an editor. He edits a very interesting weekly paper, *The Balance*. He stimulates others to write."

"I never heard of the paper," said Grandmamma, who is too old to have any pity.

"I must show it to you," said Naomi. "Frank writes for it."

"Very well," said Grandmamma. "But I am disappointed. I thought that Mr. Dabney wrote books. The papers are growing steadily worse, and more and more unfit for general reading, especially in August. I hope," she said, turning to Mr. Dabney again, "you don't write any of those terrible letters in August about home life?"

Mr. Dabney said that he didn't, and Grandmamma began to soften down. "I am very fond of literary society," she said. "It is one of my great griefs that there is so little literary society in Ludlow. You are too young, of course, Mr. Dabney, but I am sure it will interest you to know that I knew personally both Mr. Dickens and Mr. Thackeray."

Here a shudder ran round the table, and Lionel practically disappeared into his plate. I stole a glance at Mr. Dabney's face. Drops of perspiration were beginning to break out on his forehead.

"Mr. Dickens," the old lady continued remorselessly and all unconscious of the devastation she was causing, even at the sideboard, usually a stronghold of discreet impassivity, "Mr. Dickens I met at a hotel in Manchester in the sixties. I was there with me dear husband on business, and we breakfasted at the same table. Mr. Dickens was all nerves and fun. The toast was not good and I remember he compared it in his inimitable way to sawdust."

Mr. Dabney ate feverishly.

"I remember also that he made a capital joke as he was giving the waiter a tip, as me dear husband always used to call a *douceur*. 'There,' he said——"

Mr. Dabney twisted a silver fork into the shape of a hair-pin.

It was, of course, Naomi who came to the rescue. "Grandmamma," she said, "we have a great surprise for you—the first dish of strawberries.

"So early!" said the old lady; "How very extravagant of you, but how very pleasant." She took one, and ate it slowly, while Mr. Dabney laid the ruined fork aside and assumed the expression of a reprieved assassin.

"'Doubtless,'" Grandmamma quoted, "'God could have made a better berry, but doubtless He never did.' Do you know," she asked Mr. Dabney, "who said that? It was a favourite quotation of me fawther's."

"Oh yes," said Mr. Dabney, who had been cutting it out of articles every June for years, "it was Bishop Butler."

The situation was saved, for Grandmamma talked exclusively of fruit for the rest of the meal. Ludlow, it seems, has some very beautiful gardens, especially Dr. Sworder's, which is famous for its figs. A southern aspect.

At one moment, however, we all went cold again, for Lionel, who is merciless, suddenly asked in a silence, "Didn't you once meet Thackeray, Grandmamma?"

Naomi, however, was too quick for him, and before the old lady could begin she had signalled to her mother to lead the way to the drawing-room.

THE PERFECT HOLIDAY*

(A LETTER)

GREAT men are few in any case, and we are so much too apt to look for them in the wrong places—in Parliament for example—that we are in danger of missing some of those that do exist. Now not only did I find a great man, but I discovered a great secret too. I discovered how to spend a holiday.

The secret is that our holidays should rest not only our minds and bodies but our characters too. Take, for example, a good man. His goodness wants a holiday as much as his poor weary head or his exhausted body. I wonder if he should not rest it by becoming for three weeks a bad man. Instead of sitting quietly on the pier, as he now does, he might pick a pocket or two. On returning from a sail in a boat he could furtively bore a hole in it. In his hotel he could mix up the boots, turn out the electric light and decamp without paying his bill. Such expenditure as his holiday involved might be met with a forged cheque. On returning to town all the errors of the three weeks could be rectified; the handkerchiefs and purses returned to his victims on the pier; provision made for the survivors of those who had been drowned when the boat filled and sank; and so forth. But that is not the point. The point

* From *Listener's Lure*.

is that he would have had a complete holiday. Similarly a wicked man should rest his wickedness and devote his month at Brighton to good works.

I do not, I must confess, see, in England, any period of prosperity for my plan ; but it is sound, none the less. Perhaps the nearest practicable advice to it that one dares to give is that on a holiday we should endeavour to change the conditions of our life in every way as completely as possible. Only thus can a holiday be, for those of us who are active and restless in mind, a genuine rest. For it is not idleness that such require, but a change of employment.

For myself, who am neither good nor bad, and therefore have neither goodness nor badness to rest, the best holiday would be some occupation in the open air of an exciting or continually engrossing character, as utterly opposed to the ordinary routine of driving a pen as could be devised. And I think I have found it. I believe that a perfect holiday would be to join a travelling circus for a week or so as a utility man.

This discovery came upon me in a flash at Southampton as I watched the performance. During one turn—it was that hoary bare-backed jockey act in which the rider sits on the horse's tail and rocks his arms, and of which I tired permanently thirty years ago—I read in the programme the announcement of the circus's immediate intentions, and it was then that the desirability of such a life made itself felt—desirability at any rate to a weary literary hack who wished to forget his trade and himself in a certain absorbing Bohemian strenuousness. For on the next day there were to be two performances and a grand procession at Winchester ; and the next day at Basingstoke ; and the next day at Farnham, and so forth—always the two performances and always (weather permitting) the grand procession of triumphal cars through the principal streets at noon.

What a life ! Everything in it but sleep, so far as I can see. Popularity, applause, naphtha lamps,

might and muscle ; the contiguity of wild beasts ; tigers, tigers, burning bright in the watches of the night ; acquaintance with clowns ; proximity to dazzling equestriennes :—all inspiring reverence and wonder in small boys. What a life ! And wages, too, honestly earned, and perhaps now and then some food and drink. Perhaps a word from Lord John himself : not necessarily friendly, but a word from a lord.

So I felt as I read the programme, quite content to be just a menial hand. But then came the great man, Pimpo, and I saw that I must aim higher.

I may say at once that Pimpo was the busiest clown I have ever seen, and the most versatile. The ordinary clown, it is true, may now and then be detected by the observant—and all of us are observant in a circus—within the clothes of the ring-master, or among the gentlemen who stand at the entrance with white gloves and applaud the ladies ; while his appearance, devoid of humour, among the troupe of acrobats who leap over elephants, is not uncommon. But Pimpo never divested himself of his character as a laughter maker, whatever his rôle might be. And he had more rôles than I can remember. We saw him first as a clown and clown only, winning bottles of wine from the ring-master by a series of adroit sophisms. He was then, as I say, a clown only : a good one, it is true, but no more. He came next with a tea-tray and essayed to loop the loop on it, on this occasion proving himself to be a finished acrobat. A troupe of jumping dogs soon after entered ; and who should be their trainer and exhibitor but Pimpo ? Later came the great attraction of the evening, if the size of type on the bills is an indication : a " Horde of Forest-bred Siberian Bears." In strolled the horde, very tame and mild, three in number, and sat at a desk and drank milk from a bottle and rode on a toy roundabout—all under the direction of whom ? Pimpo. (There is no doubt about his name, for it was on his back.)

Here was versatility enough, one would think : but Pimpo had other views. Only a few minutes passed before he was again in our midst as a wire-walker, doing things in mid-air that I could not do on the ground and putting to shame his three companions, who performed as it were on crutches beside him. And then a final entry, as impresario to a couple of elephants whose special talent was shaving each other and extinguishing a house on fire. That was an evening's work of some magnitude alone : but Pimpo did not merely put his various beasts through their tricks and nothing else : he jested incessantly until the little boys' laughter was as steadily recurrent as the roar of the surge ; he tumbled ; and once, threatening to fight the ring-master, he took off twenty waistcoats.

The elephants gone, and the burning house extinguished, the circus men began to tear up the seats, and loosen the tent-ropes, and prepare for the march on Winchester. I waited a little to watch them, and then turned away towards my inn. As I did so I caught sight of a sturdy fellow with a chalked face carrying a truss of hay towards the elephants' tent. It was Pimpo, beginning his night's work.

"There," I said to myself, "goes a great man. It is he I would be for a fortnight,—that would be a holiday indeed."

THE RETURN OF ULYSSES*

[Mrs. Boody was Mr. Ingleside's housekeeper. Her husband had deserted her some years before.]

THE following Friday evening was a special one in honour of Alison's return—the guests, arriving for dinner instead of after it. To meet the situation, a cook had been engaged to assist in the kitchen and a butler ordered from the Stores. Mr. Ingleside wanted Timbs to serve in that capacity; but his daughters were against it for the reasons (1) that he was engaged as a chauffeur only; (2) that he was an engineer, and therefore a superior person; (3) that he would do it badly; and (4, which alone would have carried the day) that he was a darling, and they did not want him to: it would hurt his feelings. (How do chauffeurs acquire this trick of suggesting that their feelings would be hurt?) The butler was therefore ordered.

When Mrs. Boody was told of this project her face clouded.

"Oh, Miss Alison," she said, sinking into a chair.

"Mrs. Boody, whatever is the matter?" Alison asked.

"Oh, Miss Alison," said Mrs. Boody, "not a hired butler, I implore you. That's what Boody was. Suppose . . . Oh, it's too dreadful."

"But, Mrs. Boody," said Alison, "the world's full of hired butlers. Why should this one be Mr. Boody?"

* From *Mr. Ingleside*.

"I can't say, Miss," said Mrs. Boody, "but I've got that feeling. One of them presentiments. Suppose it should be right? I don't often have them, but they always come true. I had one before my sister's youngest died of the bronchitis. I had another before the young King and Queen of Spain, bless their hearts, were married. I knew there'd be a bomb; and there was."

"I'm very sorry," said Alison, "but there will be so many people here you couldn't possibly manage alone."

"No, I know that," said Mrs. Boody, still holding her left side, "but couldn't you get one of those nice young women who go out waiting? They're just as handy as a man, and far more reliable. You can't keep the men from the decanters, both on the stairs and in the pantry: they're so accustomed to their little nips. The young women are always steady."

"I think we shall get a nice man," said Alison.

"They're none of them really nice," said Mrs. Boody. "Not hired butlers. Your own butler can be nice, but not the hired ones. I know them."

Mr. Ingleside, however, refused to alter his plans; and the butler was not countermanded. He was to be there at four o'clock to begin his preparations; and at that hour the bell rang, followed a minute after by a piercing scream. Alison and Ann looked at each other in alarm. "Mr. Boody!" Ann cried, as they both ran into the passage.

The sight that met their eyes was alarming—Mrs. Boody in a swoon on the floor, and a burly man stealthily retreating.

"Stop!" Alison cried; and he stepped back and closed the door. At the same time Ann ran for some water, and Mrs. Boody opened her eyes. She looked all round in a dazed way, and then fixed her gaze on the man.

"Oh, Horace!" she said.

"Well?" said the man.

"Oh, Horace! after all these years. I wonder you dare."

"Well," said the man, "if I'd have known, I shouldn't have dared."

"Are you Mr. Boody?" Alison asked him.

"That *was* my name," said the man, who seemed to have a faculty of swiftly recognizing the inevitable and meeting it philosophically.

"How could you be so cruel," Alison continued; "as to leave Mrs. Boody?"

"Well, Miss," said Mr. Boody, "it was better than living with her and not hitting it off."

"It was your duty to look after her," said Alison. "She might have starved."

"She hasn't," said Mr. Boody, with an expressive glance at Mrs. Boody's comfortable contours. Mrs. Boody by this time was on her feet. "She looks to me," Mr. Boody went on, "as if she had found a good place and was very happy in it—a great deal happier than she ever would have been with me. She's been luckier than I have, anyway."

"Oh, Horace," said Mrs. Boody.

Alison felt the presence of a fallacy, but could not phrase it.

Mr. Boody detected her difficulty, and hastened to improve his position. "My belief has always been," he said, "that people who don't get on should separate."

"Oh, Horace," said Mrs. Boody again, adding: "How often have you separated?"

This was a home thrust, and Mr. Boody could not disguise the fact that he felt it.

"But it's no subject of talk for young ladies like them to listen to," Mrs. Boody continued.

"That it isn't," agreed Mr. Boody, with cheerful quickness. "And I'm sure, Miss," he added to Alison, "that you'd like me to go back as soon as possible and send another man? *My dear*," he said, "would be bound to make a failure of your party. Speaking for myself," he said, "I'm sure I couldn't trust myself to handle anything. *My dear* wouldn't permit of it."

"Your nerve," retorted Mrs. Boody, who was now quite herself again, "would permit of anything."

"I meant my nerves," said Mr. Boody meekly.

At this moment Mr. Ingleside arrived. "By God's special providence," as Mrs. Boody afterwards used always to say in telling the story. She looked upon this timeliness as a reward for years of conscientious chapel attendance.

Mr. Boody, who had been on the point of escaping in earnest, stood in deferential if not abject silence while Alison explained the situation to her father.

"You had better come in here," Mr. Ingleside said to Mr. Boody, and they disappeared in his study, where they remained for some minutes. Then Mrs. Boody was sent for, and then Mr. Boody left the house; and in the course of an hour another butler who was nobody's husband arrived, and all went well.

Mrs. Boody, as it happened, scored all round; for her chances of being confronted with her husband any more were reduced practically to nothing, while Mr. Ingleside had seen to it that Mr. Boody in future was to pay for his freedom by a weekly allowance to his lawful wife, or accept consequences which might be very serious to one whose love of liberty was so warm.

Talking of the interview after dinner to his friends, Mr. Ingleside said that he had never had such difficulty in administering reproof. "What are you to do? Here was a man—a rover by disposition—who was thoroughly tired of his wife, and had left her. As he said more than once: 'That's better than double harness wearing both of us out, isn't it?'"

"What could I say but 'yes'?"

"Of course, the stupid thing is that his wife hadn't starved. But she hadn't. Realizing that she had been abandoned, she dropped as soon as possible, like a sensible woman, into a good situation. That was Boody's trump card, and he made the most of it.

"'But you promised at the altar,' I said.

"'Pardon me,' he interrupted, 'we was registered.'

" Another set back for me.

" ' Well,' I said, ' whether you were registered or not, you took your wife for better or for worse, and it was on the distinct understanding that you would stick to her and support her.'

" ' True,' he said. ' But I was very young then : I didn't know my own mind. I was excited, and that's the fact. It's a kind of intoxication,' he added, ' and then you get sober, and you're different.'

" What is one to say to a man like that ? Every word he spoke was true.

" ' Well,' I said, ' it's very unfortunate. In the eye of the law she is your wife, and you must contribute to her,' and I drew up a paper for him to sign.

" While I was writing it, I remembered that he was a Don Juan : it is so difficult to keep all these points together in one's mind.

" ' And what,' I asked, ' do you say to Mrs. Boody's charge that you went off with another woman ? '

" ' It's quite true,' he said : ' I did.'

" ' After your first experience of marriage ? '

" ' Bless your heart, sir,' he said, ' that makes no difference. One always thinks the next is the perfect one.'

" True again.

" ' But don't you know it's wicked ? ' I said.

" ' Oh, I've no doubt of that,' he replied, ' but I was so lonely.'

" And so," Mr. Ingleside concluded, " ended my career as a censor of immorality."

Her new sense of immunity, and the addition of several pounds a year to her income, were as nothing compared with Mrs. Boody's triumph as one whose presentiments come true. On the following Sundays she paid a round of visits to her friends to tell the wonderful story. A husband had long been a negligible ingredient of life ; but a story !—there was more comfort in a good story any day, and she now had one worth telling. Whatever scandal may have been talked in the dining-rooms, drawing-rooms,

and boudoirs of the houses where her friends were in service—whatever narrations of unhappiness and discord and infidelity (and what else is there to talk about ?)—they were empty compared with the great Boody presentiment, as detailed in the kitchen or the servants' hall.

" You remember," Mrs. Boody would begin, " you remember that presentiment I had about poor Annie's child before it died of the bronchitis ? You remember how I said it couldn't live, poor mite ? And you remember that other presentiment.—I must have told you often—that other presentiment I had about the young King and Queen of Spain, Princess Ena that was, bless their hearts ? On their wedding day ? How I knew there'd be a bomb, and there was ! You remember that, don't you ? Well, that's nothing to what I'm going to tell you now. . . ."

So Mrs. Boody would begin. Don't you envy her ? I think she was at those moments the happiest woman on earth.

It was not a story that lost either in the telling or the retelling. " And at that moment," she would say, while the audience drew closer still—" and at that moment, while Boody's hand was absolutely turning the door handle to run—and you know I should never have had any hold on him, if he had got away then—at that moment, by God's special providence, who should walk in but the master. . . ."

If all deserted wives were so happy !

A FEW VERSES

A SONG AGAINST SPEED*

VELOCITY—its praises ring
That those who race may read :—
The joyousness of hurrying,
The ecstasies of speed.
Yet flame-like though your progress be,
Some thrills you've yet to gain ;
Not dead to all sensations we
Who loiter in the lane.

Of speed the savour and the sting,
None but the weak deride ;
But ah, the joy of lingering
About the country side !
The swiftest wheel, the conquering run
We count no privilege
Beside acquiring, in the sun,
The secret of the hedge.

Why is no poet fired to sing
• The snail's discreet degrees,
A rhapsody of sauntering,
A gloria of ease—
Proclaiming theirs the baser part
Who consciously forswear
The delicate and gentle art
Of never getting there ?

* From *Highways and Byways in Sussex* (with alterations).

To be there first!—'tis time to ring
The knell of such an aim ;
To be the swiftest!—riches bring
So easily that fame.
To shine, a highway meteo ,
Devourer of the map!—
A vulgar bliss to choose before
Repose in Nature's lap.

Most, most of all when comes the Spring
Again her hand to lay
Lovely, benign and quickening
On meadow, hill and spray,
Should speed's enchantment lose its power ;
For " None who would exceed "
('Tis Nature speaks) " a mile an hour,
My heart aright can read."

The turnpike from the car to fling,
As from a yacht the sea,
Is doubtless as inspiriting
As aught on land can be ;
The sting, the stimulus, I grant,
But look behind the veil—
Suppose that while the engines pant
You miss the nightingale !

HALCYON SPORT *

[Suggested by reading in a newspaper that a man in the Midlands boasted of having shot, in his time, 53 kingfishers].

ERE Progress yet to guns had led,
A man, to kill his prey,
Had need of qualities of head
That now have little play,
When any fool can pull a trigger
And shoot his tiger, bird, or nigger;
And more, in his benightedness,
When slaying called for wit,
A fowler slew no bird unless
Some stomach needed it:
Whatever flew and was not food
Might fly unharmed and raise its brood,
The world grew wiser, and at last
The double-barrel came,
And with it the iconoclast
Who kills in Learning's name,
And now, alas for whatsoe'er
Of feathered life is labelled "rare!"
For we, who glory in a state
Enlightened and humane,
Who of the cult of beauty prate,
And prate and prate again,
We merely praise: we do not strive
To keep our lovely things alive!
The flashing spirit of the weir,
The river's brightest gem—
Can no one hold our Halcyons dear
Enough to fight for them?
That any one permitted be,
Unlashed, to slaughter fifty-three. . . .!

* From *Listener's Lure*.

AN IRISH GIRL *

NOT she alone is fair to view
Whose classic beauty has no mar;
Illumined plainness sways us too,
The glorified irregular!
More comely e'en than symmetry
The lack of it may sometimes be.

There was an Irish girl I knew—
I would not have one freckle changed,
I would not have her grey eyes blue,
Her lawless sunny hair arranged,
I would not give her rustic mien
For the distinction of a queen.

Less of St. James than of St. Giles
There was about her witchery:
I think that she imprisoned smiles
And every moment one leapt free;
And yet her forehead could express
A truly awful seriousness.

Old Ireland's wrongs she throbbed to tell,
This slim, Home-ruling, patriot rogue,
Whilst like a benediction fell
The restful music of her brogue;
For from her fierce antipathy
To Saxons, she excepted me.

* From *Her Infinite Variety*.

CLAY *

"WE are but clay," the preacher saith ;
 "The heart is clay, and clay the brain,
And soon or late there cometh death
 To mingle us with clay again."

Well let the preacher have it so,
 And clay we are, and clay shall be ;—
Why iterate ?—for this I know,
 That clay does very well for me.

When clay has such red mouths to kiss,
 Firm hands to grasp, it is enough :
How can I take it aught amiss
 We are not made of rarer stuff ?

And if one tempt you to believe
 His choice would be immortal gold,
Question him, Can you then conceive
 A warmer heart than clay can hold ?

Or richer joys than clay can feel ?
 And when perforce he falters nay,
Bid him renounce his wish, and kneel
 In thanks for this same kindly clay.

* From *The Friendly Town*.

THE CRICKET BALL SINGS *

LEATHER—the heart o' me, leather—the rind o' me,

O but the soul of me's other than that!
Else, should I thrill as I do so exultingly
Climbing the air from the thick of the bat?
Leather—the heart o' me: ay, but in verity
Kindred I claim with the sun in the sky.

Heroes, bow all to the little red ball,
And bow to my brother ball blazing on high.

Pour on us torrents of light, good Sun,
Shine in the hearts of my cricketers, shine;
Fill them with gladness and might, good Sun,
Touch them with glory, O brother of mine,
Brother of mine,
Brother of mine!

We are the lords of them, Brother and Mate,
I but a little ball, thou but a Great!

Give me the bowler whose fingers embracing me
Tingle and throb with the joy of the game,
One who can laugh at a smack to the boundary,
Single of purpose and steady of aim.
That is the man for me: striving in sympathy,
Ours is a fellowship sure to prevail.
Willow must fall in the end to the ball—
See, like a tiger I leap for the bail.

Give me the fieldsman whose eyes never stray from
me,
Eager to clutch me, a roebuck in pace:
Perish the unalert, perish the "buttery,"
Perish the laggard I strip in the race.

Grand is the ecstasy, soaring triumphantly,
Holding the gaze of the meadow is grand,
Grandest of all to the soul of the ball
Is the finishing grip of the honest brown hand.

Give me the batsman who squanders his force on me,
Crowding the strength of his soul in a stroke ;
Perish the muff and the little tin Shrewsbury,
Meanly contented to potter and poke.
He who would pleasure me, he must do doughtily,—
Bruises and buffetings stir me like wine.
Giants, come all, do your worst with the ball,
Sooner or later you're mine, sirs, you're mine.

Pour on us torrents of light, good Sun,
Shine in the hearts of my cricketers, shine,
Fill them with gladness and might, good Sun,
Touch them with glory, O Brother of mine,
Brother of mine,
Brother of mine !

We are the lords of them, Brother and Mate :
I but a little ball, thou but a Great.

COMPENSATION

ON Saturday, at midnight, in a Square '
In Somers Town, I met a married pair.
The wife was pinched and tired, her dress was torn,
I never saw a woman more forlorn.
The husband was a weakly, shivering man
Who had a no less weary, broken air.
Thus homewards through the rain they almost ran,
His arm within her arm.
While I, dry-shod and warm,
Loitered along the street well pleased to see
The mud turn gold beneath the gas lamps' glare.
Just as they passed I heard the woman say
"My darling": say it too in such a way
As one who loved her husband tenderly,
And was herself by him loved tenderly.

WINTER SOLACE

(Prologue to *The Friendly Town*).

WHEN still in the season
Of sunshine and leisure,
While blithe yet we wander
O'er meadow and Down,
O say is it treason
To think of the treasure
Heaped up for us yonder
In grey London town ?

We hunt the sweet berry
With purple-stained ardour,
Each bramble one hooks in
Is bent 'neath its load :
It's free and it's merry
In nature's rich larder—
But O to hunt books in
The Charing Cross Road !

As daylight expires in
This best of Septembers,
A coolness comes blowing—
A chill wintry hint !
But—think !—it blows fires in,
And dream-kindling embers,
And candle-light glowing
On time-mellowed print !

The glory of summer
One's being rejoices ;
Yet hail to this flavour
Of summer's decay.
It's bringing the glamour,
The lights and the voices,
The dear homely savour
Of London this way !

AD DOROTHEAM

[Written for Mr. C. L. Graves' *Hawarden Horace*, as a version, supposed to be by Mr. Gladstone, of "Est mihi nonum", and still found here and there with Mr. Gladstone's name to it.]

I KNOW where there is honey in a jar,
Meet for a certain little friend of mine ;
And Dorothy, I know where daisies are
That only wait small hands to intertwine
A wreath for such a golden head as thine.

The thought that thou art coming makes all glad ;
The house is bright with blossoms high and low ;
And many a little lass and little lad
Expectantly are running to and fro ;
The fire within our hearts is all aglow.

We want thee, child, to share in our delight
On this high day, the holiest and best,
Because 'twas then, ere youth had taken flight,
Thy grandmamma, of women loveliest,
Made me of men most honoured and most blest.

That naughty boy who led thee to suppose
He was thy sweetheart, has, I grieve to tell,
Been seen to pick the garden's choicest rose
And toddle with it to another belle,
Who does not treat him altogether well.

But mind not that, or let it teach thee this,
To waste no love on any youthful rover
(All youths are rovers, I assure thee, miss),
No, if thou would'st true constancy discover.
Thy grandpapa is perfect as a lover.

So, come, thou playmate of my closing day,
The latest treasure life can offer me,
And with thy baby laughter make us gay.
Thy fresh young voice shall sing, my Dorothy,
Songs that shall bid the feet of sorrow flee.

•

A FUNERAL *

IT was in a Surrey churchyard on a grey, damp afternoon—all very solitary and quiet, with no alien spectators and only a very few mourners ; and no desolating sense of loss, although a very true and kindly friend was passing from us. A football match was in progress in a field adjoining the churchyard, and I wondered, as I stood by the grave, if, were I the schoolmaster, I would stop the game just for the few minutes during which a body was committed to the earth ; and I decided that I would not. In the midst of death we are in life, just as in the midst of life we are in death ; it is all as it should be in this bizarre, jostling world. And he whom we had come to bury would have been the first to wish the boys to go on with their sport.

He was an old scholar—not so very old, either—whom I had known for some five years, and had many a long walk with : a short and sturdy Irish gentleman, with a large, genial grey head stored with odd lore and the best literature ; and the heart of a child. I never knew a man of so transparent a character. He showed you all his thoughts : as someone once said, his brain was like a beehive under glass—you could watch all its workings. And the honey in it ! To walk with him at any season of the year was to be reminded or newly told of the best that the English poets have said on all the phenomena

* From *Character and Comedy*.

of wood and hedgerow, meadow and sky. He had the more lyrical passages of Shakespeare at his tongue's end, and all Wordsworth and Keats. These were his favourites ; but he had read everything that has the true rapturous note, and had forgotten none of its spirit.

His life was divided between his books, his friends, and long walks. A solitary man, he worked at all hours without much method, and probably courted his fatal illness in this way. To his own name there is not much to show ; but such was his liberality that he was continually helping others, and the fruits of his erudition are widely scattered, and have gone to increase many a comparative stranger's reputation. His own *magnum opus* he left unfinished ; he had worked at it for years, until to his friends it had come to be something of a joke. But though still shapeless, it was a great feat, as the world, I hope, will one day know. If, however, this treasure does not reach the world, it will not be because its worth was insufficient, but because no one can be found to decipher the manuscript ; for I may say incidentally that our old friend wrote the worst hand in London, and it was not an uncommon experience of his correspondents to carry his missives from one pair of eyes to another, seeking a clue ; and I remember on one occasion two such inquirers meeting unexpectedly and each simultaneously drawing a letter from his pocket and uttering the request that the other should put everything else on one side in order to solve the enigma.

Lack of method and a haphazard and unlimited generosity were not his only Irish qualities. He had a quick, chivalrous temper, too, and I remember the difficulty I once had in restraining him from leaping the counter of a small tobacconist's in Great Portland Street, to give the man a good dressing for an imagined rudeness—not to himself, but to me. And there is more than one 'bus conductor in London who has cause to remember this sturdy Quixotic passenger's

championship of a poor woman to whom insufficient courtesies seemed to him to have been shown. Normally kindly and tolerant, his indignation on hearing of injustice was red hot. He burned at a story of meanness. It would haunt him all the evening. "Can it really be true?" he would ask, and burst forth again into flame.

Abstemious himself in all things, save reading and writing and helping his friends and correspondents, he mixed excellent whisky punch, as he called it. He brought to this office all the concentration which he lacked in his literary labours. It was a ritual with him; nothing might be hurried or left undone, and the result, I may say, justified the means. His death reduces the number of such convivial alchemists to one only, and he is in Tasmania, and, so far as I am concerned, useless.

His avidity as a reader—his desire to master his subject—led to some charming eccentricities, as when, for a daily journey between Earl's Court Road and Addison Road stations, he would carry a heavy hand-bag filled with books, "to read in the train." This was no satire on the railway system, but pure zeal. He had indeed no satire in him; he spoke his mind and it was over.

It was a curious little company that assembled to do honour to this old kindly bachelor—the two or three relatives that he possessed, and eight of his literary friends, most of them of a good age, and for the most part men of intellect, and in one or two cases of world-wide reputation, and all a little uncomfortable in unwonted black formality. We were very grave and thoughtful, but it was not exactly a sad funeral, for we knew that had he lived longer—he was sixty-three—he would certainly have been an invalid, which would have irked his active, restless mind and body almost unbearably; and we knew, also, that he had died in his first real illness after a very happy life. Since we knew this, and also that he was a bachelor and almost alone, those of us who were not his kin

were not melted and unstrung by that poignant sense of untimely loss and irreparable removal that makes some funerals so tragic ; but death, however it come, is a mystery before which one cannot stand unmoved and unregretful ; and I, for one, as I stood there, remembered how easy it would have been oftener to have ascended to his eyrie and lured him out into Hertfordshire or his beloved Epping, or even have dragged him away to dinner and whisky punch ; and I found myself meditating, too, as the profoundly impressive service rolled on, how melancholy it was that all that storied brain, with its thousands of exquisite phrases and its perhaps unrivalled knowledge of Shakespearean philology, should have ceased to be. For such a cessation, at any rate, say what one will of immortality, is part of the sting of death part of the victory of the grave, which St. Paul denied with such magnificent irony.

And then we filed out into the churchyard, which is a new and a very large one, although the church is old, and at a snail's pace, led by the clergyman, we crept along, a little black company, for, I suppose, nearly a quarter of a mile, under the cold grey sky. As I said, many of us were old, and most of us were indoor men, and I was amused to see how close to the head some of us held our hats—the merest barley-corn of interval being maintained for reverence' sake ; whereas the sexton and the clergyman had slipped on those black velvet skull-caps which God, in His infinite mercy, either completely overlooks, or seeing, smiles at. And there our old friend was committed to the earth, amid the contending shouts of the football players, and then we all clapped our hats on our heads with firmness (as he would have wished us to do long before), and returned to the town to drink tea in an ancient hostelry, and exchange memories, quaint, and humorous, and touching, and beautiful, of the dead.

MIDDELBURG *

WITH Middelburg I have associated, for charm, Hoorn ; but Middelburg stands first. It is serenely, happier, more human ; while the nature of the Zeelander is to the stranger so much more ingratiating than that of the North Hollander. The Zeelander—and particularly the Walcheren islander—has the eccentricity to view the stranger as a natural object rather than a phenomenon. Flushing being avowedly cosmopolitan does not count, but at Middelburg, the capital of Zeeland, you may, although the only foreigner there, walk about freely and receive no embarrassing attentions.

It is not that the good people of Walcheren are quicker to see where their worldly advantage lies. They are not schemers or financiers. The reason resides in a native politeness, a heritage, some have conjectured, from their Spanish forefathers. One sees hints of Spanish blood also in the exceptional flexibility and good carriage of the Walcheren women. Whatever the cause of Zeeland's friendliness, there it is ; and in Middelburg the foreigner wanders at ease, almost as comfortable and self-possessed as if he were in France.

And it is the pleasantest town to wander in, and an astonishingly large one. A surprising expansiveness when one begins to explore them is an idiosyncrasy of Dutch towns. From the railway, seeing a church

* From *A Wanderer in Holland*.

spire and a few roofs, one had expected only a village ; and behold street runs into street until one's legs ache. This is peculiarly the case with Gorinchem, which is almost invisible from the line ; and it is the case with Middelburg, and Hoorn, and many other towns that I do not recall at this moment.

My advice to travellers in Walcheren is to stay at Middelburg rather than at Flushing (they are very nigh each other) and to stay, moreover, at the Hotel of the Abbey. It is not the best hotel in Holland as regards appointment and cuisine ; but it is certainly one of the pleasantest in character, and I found none other in so fascinating a situation. For it occupies one side of the quiet square enclosed by the walls of the Abbey of St. Nicholas (or Abdij, as the Dutch oddly call it), and you look from your windows through a grove of trees to the delicate spires and long low façade of this ancient House of God, which is now given over to the Governor of Zeeland, to the library of the Province, and to the Provincial Council who meet in fifteenth century chambers and transact their business on *nouveau art* furniture.

What the Abbey must have been before it was destroyed by fire we can only guess ; but one thing we know, and that is that among its treasures were paintings by the great Mabuse (Jan Gossaert), who once roystered through Middelburg's quiet streets. Another artist of Middelburg was Adrian van der Venne, who made the quaint drawings for Jacob Cats' symbols ; but the city has never been a home of the arts. Beyond a little tapestry, some of which may be seen in the stadhuis, and some at the Abbey, it made nothing beautiful. From earliest times the Middelburghers were merchants—wool merchants and wine merchants principally, but always tradespeople and always prosperous and contented.

A tentoonestelling (or exhibition) of copper work was in progress when I was there last summer ; but it was not interesting, and I had better have taken the advice of the Music Hall manager, in whose

grounds it was held, and have saved my money. His attitude to *repoussé* work was wholly pessimistic, part prejudice against the craft of the metal-worker in itself, but more resentment that florins should be diverted into such a channel away from comic singers and acrobats.

Like most other Dutch towns Middelburg had its period of siege. But there was this difference, that Middelburg was held by the Spanish and besieged by the Dutch, whereas the custom was for the besiegers to be Spanish and the besieged Dutch. Middelburg suffered every privation common to invested cities, even to the trite consumption of rats and dogs, cats and mice. Just as destruction seemed inevitable—for the Spanish commander, Mondragon, swore to fire it and perish with it rather than submit—a compromise was arranged, and he surrendered without dishonour, the terms of the capitulation (which, however, Spain would not allow him to carry out) being another illustration of the wisdom and humanity of William the Silent.

Middelburg has never known a day's suffering since her siege. A local proverb says, "Goed rond, goed Zeuwsch"—very round, very Zeelandish—and an old writer—so M. Havard tells us—describes Middelburg as a "round faced city." If by round we mean not only circular but also plump and comfortable, we have Middelburg and its sons and daughters very happily hit off. Structurally the town is round: the streets curve, the Abbey curves; seen from a balloon or the summit of the church tower, the plan of the city would reveal itself a circle. And there is a roundness also in the people. They smile roundly, they laugh roundly, they live roundly.

The women and girls of Middelburg are more comely and winsome than any in Holland. Their lace caps are like driven snow, their cheeks shine like apples. But their way with their arms I cannot commend. The sleeve of their bodices ends far above the elbow, and is made so tight that the naked arm

below expands on attaining its liberty, and by constant and intentional friction takes the hue of the tomato. What, however, is to our eyes only a suggestion of inflammation, is to the Zeelander a beauty. While our impulse is to recommend cold cream, the young bloods of Middelburg (I must suppose) are holding their beating hearts. These are the differences of nations—beyond anything dreamed of in Babel.

The principal work of these ruddy-armed and wide-hipped damsels seems to be to carry green pails on a blue yoke—and their perfect fitness in Middelburg's cheerful and serene streets is another instance of the Dutch cleverness in the use of green paint. These people paint their houses every year—not in conformity with any written law, but upon a universal feeling that that is what should be done. To this very pretty habit is largely due the air of fresh gaiety that their towns possess. Middelburg is of the gayest. Greenest of all, as I have said, is perhaps Zaandam. Sometimes they paint too freely, even the trunks of trees and good honest statuary coming under the brush. But for the most part they paint well.

It is not alone the cloistral Gothic seclusion in which the Abbey hotel reposes that commends it to the wise: there is the further allurements of Long John. Long John, or De Lange Jan, is the soaring tower of the Abbey church, now the Nieuwe Kerk. So long have his nearly 300 feet dominated Middelburg—he was first built in the thirteenth century, and rebuilt in the sixteenth—that he has become more than a structure of bricks and copper: a thinking entity, a tutelary spirit at once the pride and the protector of the town. His voice is heard more often than any belfry beneath whose shadow I have lain. Holland, as we have seen, is a land of bells and carillons; nowhere in the world are the feet of Time so dogged; but Long John is the most faithful sleuth of all. He is almost ahead of his quarry. He seems to know no law; he set out, I believe, with a commission

entitling him to ring his one and forty bells every seven and a half minutes, or eight times in the hour ; but long since he must have torn up that warranty, for he is now his own master, breaking out into little sighs of melancholy or wistful music whenever the mood takes him. I have never heard such profoundly plaintive airs as his—very beautiful, very grave, very deliberate. One cannot say more for persistent chimes than this—that at the Abbey hotel it is no misfortune to wake in the night.

Long John has a companion in Foolish Betsy. Foolish Betsy is the stadhuis clock, so called (Gekke Betje) from her refusal to keep time with the giant : another instance of the power which John exerts over the town, even to the wounding of chivalry. The Nieuwe Kerk would be nothing without its tower—it is one of the barest and least interesting churches in a country which has reduced to the finest point the art of denuding religion of mystery—but the stadhuis would still be wonderful even without its Betsy. There is nothing else like it in Holland; nothing anywhere quite so charming in its shameless happy floridity. I cannot describe it : the building is too complicated, too ornate ; I can only say that it is wholly captivating and thoroughly out of keeping with the Dutch genius—Spanish influence again apparent. Beneath the eaves are four and twenty statues of the Counts of Holland and Zeeland, and the roof is like a mass-meeting of dormer windows.

In addition to the stadhuis museum, which is dedicated to the history of Middelburg and Zeeland, the town has also a municipal museum, too largely given over to shells and stuffed birds, but containing also such human relics as the wheel on which Admiral de Ruyter as a boy helped his father to make rope, and also the first microscope and the first telescope, both the work of Zacharias Jansen, a Zeeland mathematician. More interesting perhaps are the rooms in the old Zeeland manner, corresponding to the Hinde-loopen rooms which one sees at Leeuwarden, but

lacking their cheerful richness of ornamentation. It is certainly a museum that should be visited, albeit the stuffed birds weigh heavily on the brow.

After all, Middelburg's best museum is itself. Its streets and houses are a never-ending pleasure. Something gladdens the eye at every turn—a blue and yellow shutter, a red and black shutter, a turret, a daring gable, a knot of country people, a fat Zeeland baby, a milk-can rivalling the sun, an old woman's lace cap, a young woman's merry mouth. Only in two respects is the town unsatisfactory, and both are connected with its streets. The liberty given to each householder to erect an iron fence across the pavement at each limit of his property makes it necessary to walk in the road, and the *pavé* of the road is so rough as to cause no slight suffering to any one in thin boots. M. Havard has an amusing passage on this topic, in which he says that the ancient fifteenth-century punishment for marital infidelity, a sin forbidden by the municipal laws no less than by Heaven, was the supply by the offending man of a certain number of paving stones. After such an explanation, the genial Frenchman adds, we must not complain :

“ Nos pères ont péchés, nos pères ne sont plus,
Et c'est nous qui portons la peine de leurs crimes.”

The island of Walcheren is quickly learned. From Middelburg one can drive in a day to the chief points of interest—Westcapelle and Domburg, Veere and Arnemuiden. Of these Veere is the jewel—Veere, once Middelburg's dreaded rival, and in its possession of a clear sea-way and harbour her superior, but now forlorn. For in the seventeenth century Holland's ancient enemy overflowed its barriers, and the greater part of Veere was blotted out in a night. What remains is a mere symbol of the past ; but there is enough to loiter in with perfect content, for Veere is unique. Certainly no little town is so good to approach—with the friendliness of its red roofs before

one all the way, the unearthly hugeness of its church and the magic of its stadhuis tower against the blue.

The church, which is visible from all parts of the island, is immense, in itself an indication of what a city Veere must have been. It rises like a mammoth from the flat. Only the east end is now used for services; the vast remainder, white and naked, is given up to bats and the handful of workmen that the slender restoration funds make it possible to employ. For there is some idea of Veere's church being one day again in perfect repair; but that day will not be in our time. The ravages of the sea only emptied it: the sea does not desecrate. It was Napoleon who disgraced the church by converting it into barracks.

Other relics of Veere's past are the tower at the harbour mouth (its fellow-tower is beneath the sea) and the beautifully grave Scotch house on the quay, once the centre of the Scottish wool trade of these parts. The stadhuis also remains, a dainty distinguished structure which might be the infant daughter of the stadhuis at Middelburg. Its spire has a slender aerial grace; on its façade are statues of the Lords of Veere and their Ladies. Within is a little museum of antiquities, one of whose most interesting possessions is the entry in the Veere register, under the date July 2nd, 1608, of the marriage of Hugo Grotius with Maria Reygersbergh of Veere, who at Loevenstein assisted in her husband's escape from prison. The museum is in the charge of a blonde custodian, a descendant of sea kings, whose pride in the golden goblet which Maximilian of Burgundy, Veere's first Marquis, gave to the town in 1551, is almost paternal. He displays it as though it were a sacred relic, and narrates the story of Veere's indignation when a millionaire attempted to buy it, so feelingly as to fortify and complete one's suspicion that money after all is but dross and the love of it the root of evil.

Flushing does little to amuse its visitors after the sun has left the sea; and we were very glad of the

excuse offered by the Middelburg kermis to return to our inland city each afternoon. The Middelburg kermis is a particularly merry one. The stalls and roundabouts fill the market square before the stad-huis, packed so closely that the revolving horses nearly carry the poffertje restaurants round with them. The Dutch roundabouts, by the way, still, like the English, retain horses: they have not, like the French, as I noticed at three fairs in and about Paris last autumn, taken to pigs and rabbits.

I examined the Middelburg kermis very thoroughly. Few though the exhibits were, they included two fat women. Their booths stood on opposite sides of the square, all the fun of the fair between them. In the west was Mlle. Jeanne; in the east the Princess Sexiena. Jeanne was French, Sexiena came from the Fatherland. Both, though rivals, used the same poster: a picture of a lady, enormous, *décolletée*, highly-coloured, stepping into a *fiacre*, to the *cocher's* intense alarm. Before one inspected the rival giantesses this community of advertisement had seemed to be a mistake; after, its absurdity was only too apparent, for although the Princess was colossal, Mlle. Jeanne was more so. Mlle. Jeanne should therefore have employed an artist to make an independent allurement.

Both also displayed outside the booths a pair of corsets; but here, I fancy, the advantage was with Mlle. Jeanne, although such were the distractions of the square that it was difficult to keep relative sizes in mind as one crossed it.

We visited the Princess first and found her large enough. She gasped on a dais—it was the hottest week of the year. She was happy, she said, except in such warmth. She was not married: lovers had sighed for her in vain. She rode a bicycle, she assured us, and enjoyment in the incredulity of her hearers was evidently one of her pleasures. Her manager listened impatiently, for our conversation interrupted his routine; he then took his oath that

she was not padded, and bade her exhibit her leg. She did so, and it was like the mast of a ship.

I dropped five cents into her plate and passed on to Mlle. Jeanne. The Princess had been large enough ; Mlle. Jeanne was larger. She wore her panoply of flesh less like a flower than did her rival. Her expression was less placid ; she panted distressfully as she fanned her bulk. But in conversation she relaxed. She too was happy, except in such heat. She neither rode a bicycle nor walked—save two or three steps. As her name indicated, she too was unmarried, although, her manager interjected, few wives could make a better omelette. But men are cowards, and such fortresses very formidable.

As we talked, the manager, who had entered the booth as *blasé* an *entrepreneur* as the Continent holds, showed signs of animation. In time he grew almost enthusiastic and patted Mlle.'s arms with pride. He assisted her to exhibit her leg quite as though its glories were also his. The Princess's leg had been like the mast of a ship ; this was like the trunk of a Burnham beech.

SISTER LUCIE VINKEN*

Ghent has many treasures, first of which I suppose is that chapel at St. Bavo's which holds enshrined "The Adoration of the Lamb," by Jan and Hubert Van Eyck; but looking back on it I remember with most vividness not its paintings or its churches, not its canals or its Hôtel de Ville, not its streets or its ruined castle, but Sister Lucie Vinken of the Convent of St. Joseph in the Petit Béguinage Notre Dame.

We came to her by a kind of accident,—if accident there be, as I like to question. It was the Grand Béguinage that we had set out to see, in one of those Belgian *fiacres* which, whether you will or not, force you back to an angle of insolent disdain. But the driver had his own opinion, and before we knew it we were within the gates of the older and smaller but far more adjacent retreat, and I have since learned that in other respects also we did well, for the Grand Béguinage outside the city, although very fascinating in its self-contained perfection, with its surrounding wall and little streets and squares and moats and bridges—by all accounts the ideal home for a children's commonwealth—is yet new, dating but from the eighteen-seventies, whereas the Petit Béguinage is untouched since the eighteenth century, and some of it is earlier still; and to go to Ghent

* From *Character and Comedy*.

to see a new building is as absurd as to go to Oxford to see a Board school.

The driver having stopped before a door in the wall with a little shrine above it, the door opened and Sister Lucie Vinken straightway became our hostess. She stood radiating welcome in a courtyard such as her countryman Peter De Hooch (for Sister Lucie Vinken is Dutch) would have painted, and drew us in. There could be no holding back, however militantly Protestant one's feelings might be, for Sister Lucie Vinken's Church does not often make a mistake, and she was not appointed to this post without reason—so charming her smile, so rosy her placid round Dutch face, so white her head-dress, and so engagingly gentle and soothing her voice. No. 233 is the number of Sister Lucie Vinken's house—all sheer Peter De Hooch too—with little bright red bricks, and white frames to the windows, and cool white walls and tiny dormers. The others are like it, surrounding their great courtyard, which has a meadow in the midst to which have strayed from their frames, to keep Peter De Hooch in countenance these late days, half a dozen of Albert Cuyp's cows. At one end is the church, and close by is the convent of St. Joseph, where Sister Lucie Vinken dwells and receives the curious. Long may she do so !

Sister Lucie Vinken led us first into the refectory; where each *religieuse* has a little cupboard with her own table necessities in it, and a sliding slab on which to place them for all meals but dinner, which is taken in company at a long table. The other meals are taken separately, each sister at her cupboard. There we went upstairs, along passages with sacred engravings on the walls, to see the bedrooms, all of which, like the houses, are dedicated to saints ; and by an odd chance, in the one that we entered, which was Lucie Vinken's own, very small and clean and holy, in one of the drawers was a packet of picture post-cards of the Béguinage—only a franc—and by another chance Lucie Vinken had no change, and very

naturally misunderstood me to say that it was of no importance and the balance of my five-franc piece should go to the *pauvres*. Lucie Vinken being the clever woman she is, I agreed hastily that that was what I had said. And then she enlarged upon the pleasures of the life, of which she has had three-and-twenty years, and hoped it might not be long before we were members of the same broad-bosomed Church; and indeed said that she felt it so much that if she had Madame's permission she would pray for her speedy conversion: and how can one say "No" to a request like that? And then, drawing Madame aside, she asked her in a whisper if Monsieur would resent it if she prayed also for him; and Madame assured her he would adore it: and so at this moment, for all I know, Sister Lucie Vinken is on her knees drawing me by invisible threads nearer and nearer to the Eternal City. . . . And she has my address too, for we exchanged cards, quite like duellists, and hers lies before me as I write. I have more than that; for I have her photograph, snapped as she stood in Peter De Hooch's doorway and smiled *adieu*, and not only *adieu* but *au-revoir*, as we drove away.

But I go too fast. For it was in her little bedroom, and dallying in the white passage among the sacred prints, and hovering on the stairs as we descended, that Sister Lucie Vinken told us all about these Béguinages and their history: how they were founded in the twelfth century; how the sisters were as free as air to come and go if they wished, but mostly stayed, all vowed to good works but not irrevocably to anything else—teaching, nursing, sewing and making lace, the last two employments being so much their staple occupation as to determine the time of vespers, which do not begin in winter or summer until the daylight has so faded as to endanger the workers' sight; worshipping always, with little if any less assiduity than real nuns who have taken the veil once and for all. "We rise at half-past four," she said in her quiet voice. "We are all very

sleepy, yes, but since it is to adore the good God it gives us pleasure." Béguinages, Lucie Vinken added, are to be found in the other chief Belgian towns—Louvain has a very beautiful one—but Ghent is their capital. Ghent counts her Béguines in thousands: the others only in hundreds. And so on.

And as she talked I found myself wondering if the Béguinage could ever come to this country, where unemployed unmarried women darken the earth. And as I looked out of a window and watched the quiet figures standing alone or in company at their gateways, all contented-looking and ready to smile in an unsmiling country—for the Belgian face is hard—or moving about by the church and the meadow, talking to their friends from the city, playing with children (which they may have to stay with them if they like), and returning from sickbeds and other kindly missions, I felt that many a single Englishwoman might do worse than give such a life a trial. To have the privileges and virtues of the nun and be no nun—that is, perhaps, to come as near the secret at any rate as to have the suffrage.

And so by gradual stages we descended to a little waiting-room with a picture by the great Otto Van Veen (Rubens's master, as every Belgian sacristan knows) in it: a picture of Christ in the house of Martha and Mary, with Mary all adoration at His feet, and a table groaning beneath a Flemish profusion of food—hares and fowls and ducks and green stuffs and joints and all the riot that the still-life painters rejoiced in—and poor Martha in the background in despair at ever reducing such chaos to an orderly hospitality without some help from her sister. Velasquez at the National Gallery gives these twain a small yet sturdy servant-maid, but not so Van Veen, Rubens's master. Well, in this room was a table which when we had first entered, half an hour before, was empty, but was now covered with lace; and by it stood an aged sister inviting us to buy. And buy we certainly should not, had not Sister

Lucie Vinken suggested the readiness of the Convent to take a cheque; and so we went off with a lace scarf for which I was to send a cheque made out to a Lady Superior for twenty-eight francs, waving farewells and calling out promises to return which I hope will be fulfilled.

And now for me Sister Lucie Vinken stands and will stand for Ghent, taking the place of the galloping Dirck and Joris of Browning's poem, who for many years, before I set foot there, had been all of Ghent that I had in mind—their hoofs beating in my head like a drum whenever the city was mentioned. But their day is past. Their noisy onset is over. The word Ghent henceforward will call forth a serene and prosperous and comfortable cooing lady in black and white, moving softly from room to room of her spotless female monastery, all smiles and sympathy and kindness and Rome. Dirck, Joris, and their sweating steeds have no place here. Over my new Ghent broods the dove.

"MY COUSIN, THE BOOK- BINDER" *

"Oh, I am so poorly! I waked it at my cousin's, the bookbinder, who is now with God."—*Charles Lamb to P. G. Patmore, 1827.*

"SO you've been reading that, sir, have you: I have a copy too. I'll fetch it and show you. . . . The inscription? Oh yes, that's all right. He's my cousin, true enough: his real name's not Elia, of course; his real name's Lamb—Charles Lamb. He's a clerk at the East India Company's in Leadenhall Street—a little dark man with a large head. Must be nearly fifty by this time.

"'Genius,' you say? Well, I've heard others say that too—one or two persons, that is: customers of mine; but I don't know. Perhaps I'm no judge of such things. I'm a bookbinder. The outside of books is my line, not the inside. Oh yes, I've read Elia's Essays—not all through, perhaps, but here and there. Quite enough to tell, anyway.

"'Genius,' you say? My idea of genius is not that. I like a straightforward thing. Did you ever read the *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, by Thomas Gray? Now, there's genius. So beautifully it goes—never a trip to the tongue from beginning to end, and everything so clear a child could understand it, and yet it's literature too. My little girl used to

* From *Character and Comedy*.

say it. *Rasselas*, too—do you know that? The Happy Valley and all the rest of it. That's genius, I think. But not this twisted stuff going backwards and forwards and one never feeling quite sure how to take it. I like a plain man with a plain mind.

"It's just the same with my cousin when you meet him. You never know what he's at. He's so nice sometimes, all heart, and friendly—and then the next time I have a notion that everything he says means something else. He leads me on to talk—just as I am talking now to you, sir,—and he seems to agree with what I say so warmly; and then all of a sudden I see that he's just making fun of me all the time. He must have his joke. He comes in here sometimes on his way from the office, and precious little he does there, I can tell you. Oh, they're an easy lot, those East India clerks.

"But with all his odd ways and that mischievous mouth of his, his heart's in the right place. Very different from his brother, who died a year or so back. He was nothing to boast of; but the airs that man used to put on! I remember his father well—a little brisk man, wonderfully like Garrick, full of jokes and bright, quick ways. He was really a scrivener, but he didn't do much of that in those days, having fallen into an easy place with old Mr. Salt, the Member of Parliament, and a great man in the law. This Mr. Salt lived in the Temple, and little John Lamb—that is your Elia's father—he was his servant: did everything for him and lived in clover. Mrs. Lamb, she cooked. Mr. Salt was the generous kind—sent the boys to school and all the rest of it. They had it all their own way till the old gentleman died, and then things went wrong one after the other. It's too sad to talk about. . . .

"Except that Mrs. Lamb and her husband's sister, Miss Sarah—'Aunt Hetty' they used to call her—never quite hit it off, it was as happy a family as you'd ask for. But there came terrible times. . . . It's too sad. . . . Where was I?—Oh yes, so you see

that Mr. John Lamb, Esquire, who died the other day, had little enough to boast of, but he walked about as if he owned the earth. He used to come in here now and then to give me an order, and he threw it to me as if it was a bone and I was a dog. Many's the time I had it on my tongue to remind him what his father was, but I kept it back. A word unsaid is still to say, He was at the South Sea House, near his brother in Leadenhall Street, but they didn't have much to do with each other. Mr. John, he was a big, blustering, happy man, while this little one who calls himself Elia is all for quietness and not being seen, and having his own thoughts and his own jokes. They hadn't much in common. . . .

" Besides, there was another thing. There's a sister, you must know, sir, a wonderful wise woman, but she's not always quite right in her head, poor dear; and when it was a question of whether someone had to promise to be responsible for her, or she must go into an asylum for the rest of her life, her younger brother, the writer of that book there, under your arm, said *he* would; and he gave up everything, and has kept her—it was thirty years ago very nearly—ever since. Well, it was thought in the family and by their friends that John, who was a grown man at the time, and a bachelor too, and beginning to be prosperous, ought to have done more than he did, and I think that sometimes he thought so too, although he was usually pretty well satisfied with himself. Anyway, he didn't go to see his brother and sister much, and when he did I've heard that there was often trouble, because he would have his own way and argufy until he lost his temper. I was told as how he once had a dispute with Mr. Hazlitt the writer over something to do with painting, and knocked him down. Just think of knocking a man down about a matter of paint! But your high-handed men will quarrel over anything.

" Like his little brother he tried writing too, but he couldn't do it. He wrote a little tract on kindness to

animals, and brought it here to be bound in morocco. Not to give away, mind, but to keep. 'Author's Copy' I had to letter it. . . . 'Kindness to animals,' I nearly said to him; 'what about kindness to sisters?' But I didn't say it.

"The sister? Ah yes, she's the pick. She's a great woman, if ever there was one. I know her better than any of them, because when they were living near here, and her brother—your Mr. Lamb, the author—was at his office, I often looked in with a pork chop or some little thing like that. There's no jokes about her; no saying things that she doesn't mean, or anything like that. She's all gold, my cousin Mary is. She understands everything, too. I've taken lots of troubles to her—little difficulties about my children, and what not—and she understands directly, for all she's an old maid, and tells me just what I want to know. She's the clever one. She can write too. I've got a little book of her stories and some poetry for children—here they are—I bound them myself: that's the best binding I can do—real russia, and hand tooling, every bit of it. Did she write all of them? No, she didn't write all, but she wrote the best. Her brother Charles did something to each, but I don't mind that. I think of them as her books—Mary's. If only she had better health, she would write much better than he does; but her poor head. . . . Every year, you must know, she goes out of her mind for a little while. Oh, it's too sad. . . .

"Have they many friends? Oh yes, a good many. Most of them are too clever for me; but there are some old-fashioned ones too, that they like for old sake's sake. They're the best. One or two of them are very good customers of mine. There's Mr. Robinson, the barrister, he brings me lots of books to mend, and I've had work for Mr. Aders, too. But as for your Mr. Lamb,—Elia,—never a stitch will he let you put into any book, even if it's dropping to pieces. Why, he won't even take the dealer's tickets off them.

He never thinks of the outside of a book, but you should see him tearing the heart out of them by the light of one candle. I'm told he knows more about what books are worth reading than anyone living. That's odd, isn't it, and his father a little serving-man! Life's full of surprises. They say he knows all about poetry, too, and helped the great poets. There's Mr. Wordsworth, why, he dedicated a book to my cousin,—I've got it here, *The Waggoner*, a pretty book it is, too,—and Mr. Coleridge, who wrote about the old sailor man and the albatross, he let my cousin put some little poems of his own into one of his books. It turns one inside out when one thinks of this, and then of the old days and his father powdering Mr. Salt's wig. But I suppose everyone's father had to work once. Still, it's funnier when one belongs to the same family.

"Now I come to remember it, his father used to write a little too—free and easy pieces for a charitable society he belonged to, and so on. It's odd how writing runs in a family. But there won't be any more Lambs to write—John left no children, only a stepdaughter, and Charles and Mary are single. This is the end. Well. . . .

"Yes, they've moved from London now. They're living in Islington. They used to live in the Temple for years, and then they went to Covent Garden, over a tinman's. Miss Lamb liked that better than the Temple, but her brother liked the Temple best. It gave her more to do, poor dear, during the day, because her sitting-room window looked over Bow Street, and she could see all that was going on. *I'm afraid Islington is very dull after that. She could see the two great theatres, too, and they both love the play.

"He wrote a farce once. I went to see it. Nearly twenty years ago, at the Lane, when Elliston had it. We had orders for the pit, my wife and I, and the house was full of clerks from the South Sea House and the East India House. But it wouldn't do. *Mr. H.*

it was called, and the whole joke was about the man's full name. But it wouldn't do. No one really minds names, and his wasn't so monstrously bad—only Hogsflesh when all was said and done. All the friends did what we could for it, and the gentlemen from the great offices cheered and clapped, but the Noes got it. I never heard such hissing. I climbed up on the seat to see how poor Miss Lamb and her brother were taking it,—they were right in front, just by the orchestra,—and there was he, hissing away louder than anyone. Think of it, hissing his own play! It's one of the best jokes I ever heard. But she, poor dear, she was just crying.

"No, he never tried the stage again, not to my knowledge. But I always say it wasn't a bad little play. If he'd only have let his sister touch it up, it would have been all right. She would have told him that Hogsflesh wasn't a good enough joke. She knows. . . .

"I went up to Islington to see them only last week, but he was out. A nice little cottage, but very quiet for her. Nothing to see but the houses over the way, and the New River, and the boys fishing for sticklebacks all day long. The river's absolutely in front of the house: nothing between you and it. Have you ever heard of Mr. Dyer, the writer? An old man, nearly blind. Well, he was coming away from my cousin's one day last year, and he walked bang into the water before anyone could stop him. Plump in. It's a wonder he wasn't drowned. There was an account of it in the *London Magazine* for December; for my cousin's a terrible man to serve up his friends and have jokes against them. He writes about everything just as it happens. I'm always expecting he'll have me in one of his essays. In fact, to tell you a secret, sir, that's why I read them. But I don't think he's got me yet.

"Yes, Islington's very different from Covent Garden, and the Temple too; for though the Temple is quiet enough, you've only got to pop into Fleet

Street to be in the thick of everything. When they lived there she used to like doing her shopping in Fetter Lane, because it was at the top of the lane that she used to go to school years and years ago. For she's getting to be an old woman, you know. Let me see, how old is she?—Why, let's see, when was Mary born? It must have been 1763; no, it was 1764. Why, she'll be sixty this year.

"What does she do all day? Well, she reads a great deal, stories for the most part. And she sews. She's very good with her needle. And then she has her thoughts. And at night they play cards. He gets back pretty soon, you know. Those East India gentlemen they don't do too much, I can tell you, and I'm told he's one of the laziest. Always either talking or writing letters, I hear. There's a good story of him down there. One of the superiors met him coming in at about half-past ten, and he said to him, sharp-like, 'Mr. Lamb,' he said, 'you come very late.' And what do you think my cousin said, the impudent little fellow? 'Yes,' he said, as cool as you like, 'yes,' he said, 'but see how early I go,' he said. I can't say it as he did, because he stammers and stutters and I'm no mimic: but the brass of it shut the gentleman up. My cousin told me himself. He likes to tell you his good things; but I can't understand a lot of them. Everyone has a different idea of what's funny. I'm with him, though, about old Munden: I could laugh at him all night.

"I'm troubled about them up there, so far from London and the theatres and the noise. It's a mistake to give up so much all at once. And they've given up their regular evenings, too, when people came in to play cards and talk. You can't ask busy folk to go to Islington.

"My cousin told me some bad news last week. She says that your Mr. Lamb,—Elia,—although he has such an easy time and a large salary, wants to leave the East India House and do nothing. I hope they won't let him. I know enough of life and of

him to see what a mistake it would be. It was a mistake to go to Islington : it will be a worse mistake to retire. He says he wants to live in the country ; but he doesn't really. Authors don't know what they want. I always say that every author ought to have a bookbinder to advise him.

"She knows it's all wrong, poor dear, but what can she do? He worries so. She sees him all miserable, and after she's said all she can against his plans, she agrees with them. That's like good women. When they see that what must be must be, they do their best. But it is very sad. . . . It's her I'm so sorry for. He's the kind of man that ought to go to business every day.

"Well, sir, good-night to you. I hope I haven't been tedious with all my talk.

"No, sir, not quite a genius ; but very clever, I grant you."

THE EMBARRASSED ELIMINATORS *

WE were talking about Lamb.

Some one suddenly asked: "Supposing that by some incredible chance all the essays except one were to be demolished, which one would you keep?"

This kind of question is always interesting, no matter to what author's work or to what picture gallery it is applied. But for the best resulting literary talk it must be applied to Shakespeare, Dickens or Elia.

"Why, of course," at once said H., whose pleasant habit it is to rush in with a final opinion on everything at a moment's notice, with no shame whatever in changing it immediately afterwards, "there's no doubt about it at all—Mrs. Battle. Absolutely impossible to give up Mrs. Battle. Or, wait a minute, I'd forgotten Bo-Bo,—'The Dissertation on Roast Pig,' you know. Either Mrs. Battle or that."•

The man who had propounded the question laughed. "I saw that second string coming," he said. "That's what every one wants: one *or* another. But the whole point of the thing is that one essay and one only is to remain: everything else goes by the board. Now? Let's leave H.

* From *Old Lamps for New*.

to wrestle it out with himself. What do *you* say, James ? ”

“ It’s too difficult,” said James. “ I was going to say ‘ The Old Actors ’ until I remembered several others. But I’m not sure that that is not my choice. It stands alone in literature : it is Lamb inimitable. His literary descendants have done their best and worst with most of his methods, but here, where knowledge of the world, knowledge of the stage, love of mankind, gusto, humour, style and imaginative understanding unite, the mimics, the assiduous apes, are left behind. Miles behind. Yes, I vote for ‘ The Old Actors. ’ ”

“ But, my dear James,” said L., “ think a moment. Remember James Elia in ‘ My Relations ’ ; remember Cousin Bridget in ‘ Mackery End. ’ You are prepared deliberately to have these for ever blotted out of your consciousness ? Because, as I understand it, that is what the question means : utter elimination. ”

James groaned. “ It’s too serious,” he said. “ It’s not to be thought of really. It reminds me of terrible nights at school when I lay awake trying to understand eternity—complete negation—until I turned giddy with the immensity of dark nothingness. ”

Our host laughed. “ You were very positive just now,” he said. “ But have you forgotten a wistful little trifle called ‘ Old China ’ ? ”

“ Or, more on your own lines,” said W., who hates actors and acting, “ the ‘ South-Sea House ’ or the ‘ Old Benchers ’ ? I will grant you the perfection—there is no other word—of the full-lengths of Dicky Suett and Bannister and Bensley’s Malvolio. There is nothing like it—you are quite right. Not even Hazlitt comes near it. One can see oneself with a great effort doing something passably Hazlittian in dramatic criticism, if one were put to it ; but Lamb, Lamb reconstructs life and dignifies and enriches it as he does so. That essay in my opinion is the justification of footlights,

grease-paint and all the tawdry business. And yet "—W.'s face glowed with his eloquence, as it always does sooner or later every evening—"and yet if I were restricted to one Elia essay—dreadful thought!—it would not be 'The Old Actors' that I should choose, but—I can't help it—'Captain Jackson.' I know there are far more beautiful things in Elia; deeper, sweeter, rarer. But the Captain and I are such old friends that it comes to this, I couldn't now do without him."

"Of course," cried H., "I had forgotten. You remind me of something I simply must keep—the Elliston." He snatched the "Essays" from our host's hands and read the following passage, while we all laughed—a double laughter—overtly with him, and covertly at him, for if there is one man living who might be the hero to-day of a similar story it is H. himself, who has a capriciousness, an impulsiveness, a forgetfulness, and a grandiosity that are Ellistonian or nothing.

"'Those who knew Elliston,'" he read, "'will know the manner in which he pronounced the latter sentence of the few words I am about to record. One proud day to me he took his roast mutton with us in the Temple, to which I had superadded a haddock. After a rather plentiful partaking of the meagre banquet, not unrefreshed with the humbler sorts of liquors, I made a sort of apology for the humility of the fare, observing that for my own part I never ate but of one dish at dinner. "I too never eat but one thing at dinner,"—was his reply—then after a pause—"reckoning fish as nothing." The manner was all. It was as if by one peremptory sentence he had decreed the annihilation of all the savoury esculents which the pleasant and nutritious-food-giving Ocean pours forth upon poor humans from her watery bosom. This was greatness, tempered with considerate tenderness to the feelings of his scanty but welcoming entertainer.'"

"Well," said our host, reclaiming the book, "my

vote if I had one would be for 'Mackery End in Hertfordshire'; and I make the declaration quite calmly, knowing that we are all safe to retain what we will. James will of course disagree with the choice; but then you see I am a sentimentalist, and when Lamb writes about his sister and his childhood I am lost. And 'Mackery End' delights me in two ways, for it not only has the wonderful picture of Bridget Elia in it but we see Lamb also on one of his rapturous walks in his own county. I never see a field of wheat without recalling his phrase of Hertfordshire as 'that fine corn country.' "

"All very well," said James, "but if you talk like this how are you going to let 'Dream Children' go?"

"Ah, yes," sighed our host, "'Dream Children'—of course! How could I let that go? No, it's too difficult."

"What about this?" said the grave incisive voice of K., who had not yet spoken, and he began to read:—

"'In proportion as the years both lessen, and shorten, I set more count upon their periods, and would fain lay my ineffectual finger upon the spoke of the great wheel. I am not content to pass away "like a weaver's shuttle." Those metaphors solace me not, nor sweeten the unpalatable draught of mortality. I care not to be carried with the tide, that smoothly bears human life to eternity; and reluct at the inevitable course of destiny. I am in love with this green earth; the face of town of country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets.'

"Who is going to forswear that passage?" K. asked sternly, fixing his eyes on us as if we were one and all guilty of damnable heresy.

We all sighed.

K. searched the book again, and again began to read:—

"'In sober verity I will confess a truth to thee,

reader. I love a Fool—as naturally as if I were of kith and kin to him. When a child, with child-like apprehensions, that dived not below the surface of the matter, I read those Parables—not guessing at the involved wisdom—I had more yearning towards that simple architect, that built his house upon the sand, than I entertained for his more cautious neighbour: I grudged at the hard censure pronounced upon the quiet soul that kept his talent and—prizing their simplicity beyond the more provident, and, to my apprehension, somewhat unfeminine wariness of their competitors—I felt a kindliness, that almost amounted to a *tendre*, for those five thoughtless virgins.’

“Who is going to turn his back for ever on that passage? No,” K. went on, “it won’t do. It is not possible to name one essay and one only. But I have an amendment to propose. Instead of being permitted to retain only one essay, why should we not be allowed a series of passages equal in length to the longest essay—say ‘The Old Actors’? Then we should not be quite so hopeless. That, for example, would enable one to keep the page of Bensley’s Malvolio, the description of Bridget Eliot, a portion of the ‘Mrs. Battle,’ Ralph Bigod, a portion of ‘Captain Jackson,’ the passages I have read—and what I personally should insist upon including earlier almost than anything—the Fallacies on rising with the lark and retiring with the lamb.”

“Well,” said the suggester of the original problem, “it’s a compromise and therefore no fun. But you may play with it if you like. The sweepingness of the first question was of course its merit. James is the only one of you with the courage really to make a choice.”

“Oh, no,” said our host. “I chose one and only instantly—‘Old China.’”

“Nonsense!” said James; “you chose ‘Machinery End.’”

“There you are,” said K. “That shows.”

"Well, I refuse to be deprived of 'Old China' anyway," said our host, "even if I named 'Mackery End.' How could one live without 'Old China' ? Our discussion reminds me," he added, "of a very pretty poem—a kind of poem that is no longer written. It is by an American who came nearer Lamb in humour and 'the tact of humanity' than perhaps any writer—the Autocrat. Let me read it to you."

He reached for a volume and read as follows :—

"Oh for one hour of youthful joy !
Give back my twentieth spring !
I'd rather laugh, a bright-haired boy,
Than reign, a gray-beard king.

"Off with the spoils of wrinkled age !
Away with Learning's crown !
Tear out Life's Wisdom-written page,
And dash its trophies down !

"One moment let my life-blood stream
From boyhood's fount of flame !
Give me one giddy, reeling dream
Of life all love and fame !

* * * * *

"My listening angel heard the prayer,
And, calmly smiling, said,
'If I but touch thy silvered hair
Thy hasty wish hath sped.

"But is there nothing in thy track,
To bid thee fondly stay,
While the swift seasons hurry back
To find the wished-for day ?'

"Ah, truest soul of womankind !
Without thee what were life
One bliss I cannot leave behind :
I'll take—my—precious—wife !

"The angel took a sapphire pen
And wrote in rainbow dew,
*The man would be a boy again,
And be a husband too !*

" 'And is there nothing yet unsaid,
 Before the change appears?
 Remember, all their gifts have fled
 With those dissolving years.'

" 'Why, yes ;' for memory would recall
 My fond paternal joys ;
 ' I could not bear to leave them all—
 I'll take—my—girl—and—boys.'

" The smiling angel dropped his pen,—
 ' Why, this will never do ;
 The man would be a boy again,
 And be a father too !'

* * * * *

" And so I laughed,—my laughter woke
 The household with its noise,—
 And wrote my dream, when morning broke,
 To please the grey-haired boys."

—" We," said our host, as he closed the book and laid it aside, " are like that : we would eliminate most of Elia and have our Elia too."

" Yes," said W. " Exactly. We want them all and we value them the more as we grow older and they grow truer and better. For that is Lamb's way. He sat down—often in his employers' time—to amuse the readers of a new magazine and earn a few of those extra guineas which made it possible to write ' Old China,' and behold he was shedding radiance on almost every fact of life, no matter how spiritually recondite or remote from his own practical experience. No one can rise from Elia without being deepened and enriched ; and no one having read Elia can ever say either off-hand or after a year's thought which one essay he would retain to the loss of all the others."

B. hitherto had been a silent listener. Here he spoke, and, as so often, said the final thing. " Yes," he said, " it is vain (but good sport) to take any one of the essays and argue that it is the best. Just as

the best thing in a garden is not any particular flower but the scent of all the flowers that are there, so the best of Lamb is not any single essay but the fragrance of them all. It is for this that those gentle paths have been trodden by so much good company.

"Yes," he added meditatively. "'The scent of Elia's garden'! That is the best essay, if you like, and 'Charles (and Mary) Lamb' its title."

A WEDDING*

[Alf Pinto was a music hall singer whose real name was Herbert Duckie. He was the son of the landlady of the narrator of *Over Bemerton's*. The right pronunciation of his name is as though it were derived from a small tankard of beer.]

LIFE has just been varied by two weddings—two: one serious and the other most distinctly the reverse. I attended both.

The first wedding was that of Alf Pinto and Bonnie Birdie Twist; the second—but let us take them in order.

Bonnie Birdie Twist, as her name may suggest, is in the profession too, a sprightly lady vocalist with a high kick and a wink of such calibre that it can carry with deadly effect to the uttermost standing-room.

She has not long entered her kingdom, but is firmly established there now, hardly less profitably than Alf himself. Her particular line of song is the confidential, involving responses from an audience only too ready to oblige, her latest success being entitled, "Is there room in your lap for me?"—a question that produces in every Hall where she sings an Everlasting Yea that lifts the roof.

Such a lady would hardly have an ordinary wedding; and the ceremony to which I was invited by

* From *Over Bemerton's*.

Mrs. Duckie, and from which I felt I could not abstain without hurting that good woman's feelings, was as far removed from the ordinary as a naphtha lamp is removed from an altar candle.

The wedding was I can hardly say solemnised but achieved under difficulty by a patient and tenacious Islington Registrar in the Maltravers Assembly Rooms, which had been taken for the occasion by Birdie's father. That gentleman, who is now a thriving publican and a very assiduous racing man, was once a heavy-weight champion boxer, while Mrs. Twist, whose plush gown sent the thermometer up five degrees, had her triumphs years ago as Polly Pearl, the Coster Queen.

The Assembly Rooms were crowded with warm-hearted professionals in every kind of clothes but the expected, and jovial bookmakers and licensed victuallers—all accompanied by their ladies, and all very gay from the moment they arrived, and gayer still as the day advanced, and the ceremony became more vivacious, and the ex-bruiser's generous flow of wine got to work, and appropriate excerpts from Alf and Birdie's repertoires rose in chorus : so appropriate indeed, that it seemed as if they had been singing all their lives only by way of preparation for this exuberant festival.

Birdie's bridesmaids were her own sisters, both of whom are budding soubrettes, and four other friends with yellow hair. Be-trice had been implored by Alf to serve too, but she declined, partly on an impulse of natural prudence and partly because the legitimate drama, to which she is affiliated, must not be too friendly with the variety stage.

Alf's best men were a pair of famous knock-about who took their duties very seriously, and, to the exquisite enjoyment of the father-in-law, insisted on treating Alf as a boxer, in need of minute and exhaustive seconding. They fanned him with red handkerchiefs as he sat back in a state of hilarious exhaustion, and everyone else within reach offered

him refreshments from a black bottle, and generally and genially did all they could to relieve the state of matrimony from the stigma of holiness.

The Registrar at first seemed a little scandalised, but after a while he resigned himself to the tide of facetiousness and was carried along upon its bosom as buoyantly as any.

The only uncomfortable people there were Mr. and Mrs. Duckie and myself: but it was easy for me, being a mere spectator, to retire into the background, whereas they, simple, affectionate creatures, were perforce in the very forefront of the battle.

Poor Mrs. Duckie was, I fear, more than uncomfortable, she was shocked and sorrowful. The marriage of her eldest son, I doubt not, had been in her thoughts these many years: and in her visions she had been present with dignity and pride, Mr. Duckie beside her in his very best, and Be-trice so captivating as to make the possibility of the second wedding—the wedding that grows from a wedding, as of course one always should—a certainty. The reality, in which she found herself an alien in a new world (but her son's) of light-hearted laxity, must have been very disturbing.

Mr. Duckie's discomfiture, as charming duettists and dashing serios with gamboge locks patted his cheeks and pulled his whiskers and complimented him on his new daughter-in-law, was more physical, and was another proof of the importance to their importance of important persons keeping to their own natural environment. Here was the autocrat of the Fleet Street grill-room and countless City dinners visibly abashed in broad day. There is, I suppose, no potentate so powerful that skilful transplantation could not make small.

Bonnie Birdie Twist, so soon to be Bonnie Birdie Pinto, or rather Duckie, had a smile for every one, and she continued to recognise her friends, with appropriate greetings, such as "Cheer-O, Alice!" "What-ho, Bill!" even while the Registrar was

reciting the most compromising of his sentences, which he did to a muffled rendering by most of the company of Alf's famous chorus, adapted by a quick-witted colleague :

"Mr. Right ! Mr. Right !
Our Birdie and he have met ;
So cheer up, girls, and wish them lots of luck,
And there'll soon be . . ."

but I must not transcribe further.

Could there be a scene more different from that provided on similar occasions by the Establishment ? —and yet, I daresay, the knot will last as long, and be as honourably respected, as if it had been tied under even episcopal auspices. Certainly it could not last a shorter time than many that date from the chancel steps.

After the formality what fussing and congratulations ! There was room for a few minutes on every one's lap for the bride ; and room on hers for every one. Alf, meanwhile, was not idle, embracing and being embraced ; while funny men flung their arms round Mrs. Duckie's neck and reduced her to a mass of scarlet confusion. Mr. Duckie meanwhile was finding his bearings at the buffet ; Be-trice was the centre of an admiring circle of lion comiques ; and Ern was becoming the firm friend of a boy contortionist (known to the world as Ernesto, the Human Serpent), and rapidly losing his hold on the allurements of chauffing.

I moved among these strange impulsive confident creatures with the deepest interest. All were jolly, all were ready to give and take chaff, there was no faltering in repartee even if there was no subtlety. And all were fairly hard-working honest-living folk, whose efforts were mainly directed to keeping the ball of pleasure rolling ; that is to say, all were in a way unnecessary. I refer particularly to the professionals and the bookmakers ; for I suppose that the licensed victuallers, even in times of great

national stress, when one can imagine music halls closing all around and race meetings neglected, would still be busy in their shirt sleeves.

Whether the professionals, the bookmakers, or the publicans interested me most, I cannot say ; but all were a very curious society, living completely within their own boundaries so very differently from ordinary persons, and to the casual observer so lawlessly, and yet obeying their own laws too ; wholly independent of religion, and yet getting through life with certainly no less kindliness and forgiveness to their names than professedly religious people, if not more ; all English, and yet so thoroughly un-English ; all busy, or at any rate living fatiguing lives, making money easily and spending it easily, living practically only for to-day. I was glad that I went ; I was equally glad to escape.

I moved outside as soon as it seemed time for the couple to leave. They were to be driven off in a taxi-cab, with a comic driver and a string of boots trailing behind it like the tail of a kite. The ordinary bridegroom is careful to remove such appendages as soon as he can. It will give a vivid idea of the character of the Pinto-Twist wedding when I say that Alf spent some time in helping to fix this one to the cab.

Among the crowd outside I perceived Miss Wagstaff, who, seeing me, joined me, and we chatted together for a while.

"What do you think of it all ?" I asked, as her mouth curled sarcastically at the sight of the string of old boots and the comic men on the Assembly Room steps affecting to faint with grief into each other's arms.

"Very little," she said bitterly. "They're too much alike. A quieter kind of girl would have done him more good."

I stole a glance at her. Had she been nursing a tenderness for Alf herself ? One knows so little of one's fellow-creatures.

"And I'm tired of weddings anyhow," she said.

At this point the crowd raised three cheers and then again broke into the chorus of Alf's great song, but in its original form :

"Mr. Right! Mr. Right!

He may not have knocked just yet;
But, cheer up, girls, he's putting on his boots,
And he'll soon be here, you bet!"

This they followed with Bonnie Birdie Twist's phenomenal success :

"Is there room in your lap for me?"

to which Alf replied by thrusting his head out of the window with a thundering "No!"—and so bride and bridegroom disappeared from view.

THE FIR-TREE : *

REVISED VERSION

(AFTER HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN)

ONCE upon a time there grew a fir-tree in a great Newfoundland forest.

It had a delightful life ; the rain fell on it and nourished its roots ; the sun shone on it and warmed its heart ; now and then came a great jolly wind to wrestle with it and try its strength. The peasant children would sit at its foot and play their games and sing their little songs, and the birds roosted or sheltered in its branches. Often the squirrels frolicked there.

But the tree, although everything was so happy in its surroundings, was not satisfied. It longed to be something else. It longed to be, as it said, important in the world.

" Well," said the next tree to it, " you will be important ; we all shall. Nothing is so important as the mast of a ship."

But the tree would not have it. " The ^v mast of a ship ! " he said. " Pooh ! I hope to be something better than that."

Every year the surveyors came and marked a number of the taller trees, and then wood-cutters arrived and cut them down and lopped off their

* From *Old Lamps for New*.

branches and dragged them away to the ship-builders. The tree disdainfully watched them go.

And then one day the surveyor came and made a mark on its bark.

"Ha! ha!" said a neighbour, "now you're done for."

But the tree laughed slyly. "I know a trick worth two of that," he said, and he induced a squirrel to rub off the mark with its tail, so that when the wood-cutters came it was not felled after all.

"Oh," said the swallows when they came back next year, "you here still?"

"Surely," said the tree conceitedly. "They tried to get me, but I was too clever for them."

"But don't you want to be a mast," they said, "and hold up the sails of a beautiful ship, and swim grandly all about the seas of the world, and lie in strange harbours, and hear strange voices?"

"No," said the tree, "I don't. I dislike the sea. It is monotonous. I want to assist in influencing the world. I want to be important."

"Don't be so silly," said the swallows.

And then the tree had his wish, for one day some more wood-cutters came; but, instead of picking out the tallest and straightest trees, as they had been used to, they cut down hundreds just as they came to them.

"Look out," said the swallows. "You'll be cut down now whether you want it or not."

"I want it," said the tree. "I want to begin to influence the world."

"Very well," said a wood-cutter, "you shall," and he gave the trunk a great blow with his axe, and then another and another, until down it fell.

"You won't be a mast," he added, "never fear. Nothing so useful! You're going to make paper, my friend."

"What is paper?" asked the tree of the swallows as they darted to and fro over its branches.

"We don't know," they said, "but we'll ask the sparrows."

The sparrows, who knew, told the tree. "Paper," they said, "is the white stuff that men read from. It used to be made from rags; but it's made from trees now because it's cheaper."

"Then will people read me?" asked the tree.

"Yes," said the sparrows.

The tree nearly fainted with rapture.

"But only for a few minutes," added the sparrows. "You're going to be newspaper paper, not book paper."

"All the same," said the tree, "I might have something worth reading on me, mightn't I? Something beautiful or grand."

"You might," said the sparrows, "but it isn't very likely."

Then the men came to haul the tree away. Poor tree, what a time it had! It was sawed into logs, and pushed, with thousands of others, into a pulping machine, and the sap oozed out of it, and it screamed with agony; and then by a dozen different processes, all extremely painful, it was made into paper.

Oh, how it wished it was still growing on the hillside, with the sun and rain, and the children at its foot, and the birds and squirrels in its branches. "I never thought the world would be like this," it said. And the other trees in the paper all around it agreed that the world was an overrated place.

And the tree went to sleep and dreamed it was a mast, and woke up crying.

Then it was rolled into a long roll five miles long and put down into the hold of a ship, and there it lay all forlorn and sea-sick for a week. A dreadful storm raged overhead—the same wind that had once tried its strength on the hillside—and as they heard it all the trees in the paper groaned as they thought of the life of the forest and the brave days that were gone.

The worst of it was that the roll in which our tree lay was close by the foot of the mast, which came through the hold just here, and he found that they

were old friends. The mast said he could think of no life so pleasant as that of a mast. "One has the sun all day," he said, "and the stars all night; one carries men and merchandise about the world; one lies in strange harbours and sees strange and entertaining sights. One is influencing the world all the time."

At these words the tree wept again. But he made an effort to be comforted. "You wouldn't suggest," he inquired timidly, "that a mast was as important, say, as a newspaper?"

The mast laughed till it shook. "Well, I like that," he said. "Why, a newspaper—a newspaper only lasts a day, and everything in it is contradicted and corrected the day after! A mast goes on for years. And another thing," he added, "which I forgot: sometimes the captain leans against it. The captain! Think of that."

But the tree was too miserable.

In the harbour it was taken out of the ship and flung on the wharf, and then it was carried to the warehouse below a newspaper office in London. What a difference from Newfoundland, where there was air and light. Here it was dark and stuffy, and the rolls talked to each other with tears in their voices.

And then one night the roll in which our poor tree found himself was carried to the printing-rooms and fixed in the press, and down came the heavy, messy type on it, all black and suffocating, and when the tree came to itself in the light again it was covered with words.

But, alas! the sparrows were right, for they were not beautiful words or grand words, but such words as, "Society Divorce Case," and "Double Suicide at Margate," and "Will it be fine to-morrow?" and "Breach of Promise: Comic Letters," and "The Progress of the Strike," and "Terrible Accident near Paris," and "Grisly Discovery at Leeds," and "Bankruptcy of Peer's Cousin," and "Burglary at Potter's Bar," and "More Government Lies."

"Oh, dear," sighed the tree as it realized what it was bearing on its surface, "how I wish I had gone to sea as I was meant to do!" And it vowed that if ever it got out of this dreadful life it would never be headstrong again. But alas!—

Then, cut and folded, it was, with others like it, carried away in the cold, grey morning to a railway station bookstall, and a man bought it for a halfpenny and read it all through, and said there was nothing in it, and threw it under the seat, and later another man found it and read it, and blew choking tobacco over it, and then wrapped up some fish in it, and took it home to his family. All that night it lay scrunched up on the floor of a squalid house, feeling very faint from the smell of fish, and longing for Newfoundland and the sun and the rain, and the children and the birds.

And the next morning an untidy woman lit the fire with it. It was an unimportant fire, and went out directly.

THE EPISODE OF MR. POLK *

[The great Emprise Hotel had been established near a field which was exempted from the law of gravity, so that persons tired of life might pass through the gate into it and either be whirled into space into a new life or cease to be altogether—no one knew which. In the Hotel resided an official reconciler to life, whose appointment had been insisted upon by the House of Commons as a safeguard, named Sir Pulteney Dorman.]

I

"SEE here," said Mr. William Schuyler Polk as he faced Sir Pulteney, "I've come down here to go through your old gate. Nothing that you say will interfere with that ; but since we've got to talk, fire away."

Sir Pulteney smiled. "You are so frank," he said, "that you leave me nothing to say. Your mind is made up."

"Absolutely," said Mr. Polk.

"That shuts me out," Sir Pulteney replied ; "but at any rate you would not perhaps mind telling me a little about yourself."

"Why, certainly," said Mr. Polk ; and he began at once. His father had been an American millionaire. Railways. The money had all come to the

* From *Sir Pulteney : A Fantasy*.

only son. He had never had to work, but had occupied a desk in his father's office for a while, until the old man died. He had previously made a trip to Europe, and had fallen in love with France, and directly he was free he returned there. It had become his headquarters.

His health did not permit him to do much. He now knew that it was influence that was his true *métier*. He was a born helper of others—the *spectator ab extra*, don't you call it?—who sees most of the game and can be of most use. He had tried many things, but now knew that his destiny was to look on, observe, and, where possible, assist, either with money or sympathetic understanding.

Writing he had now abandoned; but he had, he flattered himself, directed the genius of several authors. Painting he also had given up; but he had been able to put several artists on the road that led to success. Music he loved, although he was no longer a performer; but he stood in the relation of patron to several young composers and executants.

Sir Pulteney asked for names, but it seemed that none of Mr. Polk's *protégés* in any walk of art had yet arrived. They were all studying here and there, chiefly in Paris, waiting to begin.

"They are, I suppose, young Americans?" Sir Pulteney inquired.

"No," said Mr. Polk, "foreigners for the most part—English, and French, and Italian. But," said he, "I am tired. I have no real life-force left. It is as though I had given it all. I have had also a great shock: a friend has deceived me—robbed me, in short—a young fellow in whom I had every trust, a youth of genius. That, I will confess, has turned me a little against my fellow-men. When one has lived merely to help them, and one is pulled up short like that, what is there left?"

"You are still young," said Sir Pulteney, "and very rich. Is there nothing at home you could throw yourself into?"

"Home?" queried Mr. Polk.

"America," said Sir Pulteney.

"Oh!" said Mr. Polk blankly. "No, there is nothing there," he added. "I am out of tune there. I belong to an older civilization."

"The South Seas?" said Sir Pulteney.

"My doctor would not allow it," Mr. Polk replied.

"He says that properly-cooked food and light wines are essential to me."

Sir Pulteney tried no more.

II

MR. POLK had no particular disinclination to death so long as he could control it. What he did object to was dying so slowly that he would become emaciated, or so suddenly that his hair might not be perfectly ordered; or, if violently, that he might be mangled. Such a death as Mr. Samuel offered, if it were to be death—and there was always the chance of adventure—he could face. He therefore dressed himself with more than the usual care, spent extra time with his manicure set, and twice changed his mind about his shoes. He took his ordinary light breakfast of toast and butter and China tea—the bread, the butter, and the tea all coming direct from London. He then told Baker, his valet, of his plans, placed in his care his keys and money, and informed him of the provision which he had made for him in his will—a piece of news which the man received with a composure more perfect than the master's.

With these words and a warning to say nothing about it, he shook hands and passed out into the garden, walking at a leisurely but steady pace towards the shrubbery path that led to the gate in the wall.

In behaving thus privately Mr. Polk was disregarding a managerial request pasted up in every room (beneath the extract from the Hotel-keepers'

Liability Act), to the effect that due notice should be given at the office of a guest's intention to pass through the gate, in order that the Press, the photographers, and the cinematoscopists might be communicated with. Mr. Polk, however, though, like all Americans, he appreciated enterprise, wished to avoid publicity himself. Moreover, he had seen too many action-pictures: he knew their undignified way of accelerating one's steps.

Arrived at the gate, he inserted his key and opened it. This, in common with all the guests, he had done before, and had even thrown in a stone to see it hurtle away into space; but never before had he set foot within. He was conscious that his heart was beating unusually fast, and he feared that a drop of perspiration had formed on his brow; but he stepped through and closed the gate firmly.

Between him and the turf proper was a narrow strip of grass, separated from the meadow by a wire. This, he realized at once, was neutral ground, and here he stood for a long time motionless, trying to collect that composure which all self-respecting Americans must signally possess.

He thought of the morrow's papers—perhaps it would be in this very evening's ones:

“WEALTHY AMERICAN'S SUICIDE,”

“HOTEL'S FIRST EXPERIMENTALIST.”

“ENGLAND BEATEN AGAIN.”

He thought, with more than a suspicion of moisture in his eye, how his man would miss him. He had been severe and critical often, but that there was a deep spring of affection for him in Baker's heart he did not doubt.

He thought of his first wife, of his second wife, of all his wives; how they would read the news, and perhaps understand him then. Then. Ah! “There is no illuminant like death,” he said to himself, and wondered if he had invented it or if it was a memory.

Pretty good, anyway, he thought. It was a wonderful gift—this packing of concentrated thought. He had never been much good at it before. Strange he could do it now like that. We learn through suffering. At forty-three he had to go through the crisis to get the power. Perhaps he ought to live on and take to epigrams, like La Rochefoucauld or Vauvenargues. Perhaps that was his true walk in life, his destined *métier*. Only a man of ripe experience and observation could do it. "The wisdom of many and the wit of one"—was that his own, or was that also a memory? Really his brain was not as steady and obedient as usual. "In the presence of great emotions the mind both leaps and stumbles." Another pregnant *pensée*.

Yes, the experiment was over. He had learned his lesson; he had not come there with his great, courageous, adventurous, purpose in vain. He would now return at once to his room and set down these thoughts on paper—this was a mood of sagacity and ripeness too valuable to be lost.

So deciding, he moved quickly to retire, swayed, tripped over the wire, fell towards the de-Newtonized turf, was arrested midway, and a second later was flying through the air at a pace which took away his breath and reason.

III

AN hour or so later Mr. Polk opened his eyes. He was lying on a dirty and very ancient horse-hair sofa in a small room that seemed to be entirely full of children. Several of them were seated at the table, others were on the floor. A woman was bending at the oven. The room was squalid.

"Look, mother," said one of the girls; "the gentleman's woke up."

The woman left the oven and came over to Mr. Polk.

"How do you feel now, sir?" she asked. "Sore, I reckon."

"I do ache rather," said Mr. Polk. "But where am I?"

"You're at Little Winton," said the woman. "By God's mercy you fell on a haystack, or you'd be all in bits, I'm thinking. Was it a flying-machine? If so, there's no trace of it. My Tommy here found you, and we dragged you in. We couldn't get you up to bed because there's no men about; but father'll be here soon for his dinner, and he'll fetch a doctor."

Mr. Polk closed his eyes to think. So H. G. Wells was right, after all. There had been a pullback directly the Hotel meadow had moved aside from under him. How lucky, since his getting into the field at all was all a mistake!

Which was little Tommy? he wondered. He must endow the boy, perhaps adopt him. It would be fun to develop him into the best type of Englishman. Eton, at any rate, and the University. He would transfer some stock to an account for him. £10,000 should do—fifty thousand dollars.

At this moment the father came in. "Hullo, Poll!" he said to his wife. "Smells good, whatever it is. Hullo, youngsters!"

The children ran to him and began to climb his legs, but the mother cried "Hush!" and pointed to Mr. Polk.

"Why, what's the matter?" the father asked, perplexed; and he was told the tale.

He crossed to the sofa, and inquired how Mr. Polk felt now. "Because," he added, "if you're not feeling very bad, I'll have my dinner before I fetch the doctor; but if you are, why, I'll fetch the doctor and take a bite back with me."

Mr. Polk was beginning to say that he hated to give trouble but really thought perhaps the doctor ought to have a look at him pretty quick, and suddenly found himself saying that he was feeling better and could easily wait.

"I'm not sorry," said the father: "because I'm downright peckish;" and he lifted the children to their chairs and began to cut bread for all, while his wife brought a stew to the table. "This is meat-day, sir, you see," said the father. "Only two a week—Sundays and Wednesdays—and we don't like to miss them."

Mr. Polk thought of his delicate exotic meals, and realized how wise the simple life would be for him. Plain living and high thinking—another epigram. He must give up wine and meat, and see how they affected him. Shelley was a vegetarian; so was Shaw. The simple life. Ah, yes!

"That's what comes of having a lot of children like this," said the father. "What with shoe-leather, and clothes, and cough mixture, there's precious little left for the butcher. We don't trouble the butcher much, missis, do we?" he added, laughing.

"No," she said, "but we rub along; and I'm sure, though there's times when I'm tired out, I'd rather go without mutton and beef than see anything happen to any of these."

Mr. Polk thought of his wilfully sterile career, and wondered how long it took to be married by an English registrar. "Don't you ever tremble," he asked, "when you think of their future?"

"Oh, no," said the mother. "I don't let myself look ahead so far. There's no sense in that. Besides, I'm too busy."

Mr. Polk pondered on the extreme wisdom of living as much as possible in the present. To do that which comes to hand, he thought, and do it well. After all, it is to the soil that one must go for the truest wisdom—to the immemorial, unchanging soil. Those agency people in St. James's Street could get him a little country place in no time. What an influence he might have on his rustic neighbours! The perfect state indeed—to be instructing and refining the cultured by his epigrams, and the poor by his personal charm.

"And now, sir," said the father, who had bolted his food with tremendous haste, because, as he explained, he had to walk a long way to it, and couldn't afford to lose any time ("for, as of course you know, sir," he said, "time is money), I'll fetch the doctor. I'm glad we were able to do something for you. Lie there as long as you like, and when I come back I'll see about a carriage for you."

The afternoon passed slowly. Mr. Polk lay on the sofa and ached, but he was not conscious of anything being broken. The children were alternately good and naughty, but always noisy. Their mother never lost patience with them. How was it possible, he wondered, for anyone to endure so much infantile worry? What was this devotion to the new generation, this relegation to the background of all one's own foibles and preferences, and, what is more serious, of all one's own development?

He had never been brought into such close contact with it before. He studied the woman closely; she had been pretty once, but she was now plain and prematurely old. She had only three or four teeth; her husband, he had noticed, had only three or four teeth; the children's teeth all were bad. He thought of the hundreds of pounds of his that had gone to dentists not only in New York, but in London and Paris. One of his first acts in his new country home should be to provide false teeth for his workmen and their families.

What was this carelessness of comfort and appearance, he wondered, this willing acceptance of lowly estate, this sacrifice of a good time, all in the interests of a family? It was extraordinary, unthinkable. At least, it had been unthinkable, but now, lying there, he was beginning to think of it.

In the midst of these reflections the doctor came and examined him all over. There was nothing broken; a bad shaking, yes, but nothing really serious. The best thing would be a comfortable motor-car to convey him back to the Great Emprise,

which was only two or three miles away. The doctor would send one.

Mr. Polk again closed his eyes. As tea-time drew near, the mother laid aside her sewing to prepare it, and the children were again fed. They were now dirtier than ever, having been accumulating on their faces and hands more dust and earth since dinner; but they were going to grow up, Mr. Polk knew, into men and women with children of their own. They pushed the bread and dripping into their mouths noisily and hideously, without correction, for their poor, loving, faithful mother knew nothing of manners; but they were going to grow up and carry on the world's work.

Mr. Polk drank a little of the tea, and shuddered. He recalled the Bond Street variety of pure China without which he never travelled.

Surely Baker ought to be here by now, he thought—the good Baker who had for him such admiration, manifesting itself in a thousand imitative ways, and such affection; and even as he was dwelling on this point the messenger who had been sent to the Hotel returned with a note from the manager saying that Mr. Baker had left for London with all the luggage by a morning train without paying the account; and while he and every one in the Hotel regretted the accident, he, the manager—so Mr. Polk gathered from some exceedingly polite periphrasis—would like very much to know what was the next move.

Mr. Polk let the note fall from his hand. He had no use, even in the best of health, for suspicious tradesmen. Surely, however, Baker might have waited a little longer, he thought; and how odd not to pay when he had given him money for everything!

However, in the new life which he was going to live he would not need a man. He would do things for himself. No one had a right to a man while poor people's teeth were like that. One must do something for others. A time comes when the cult of one's personality must cease; after all, it was

cultivated only to an end, and the end must be found. One has a better chance of finding a *métier* if one has no valet. Independence is thus automatically induced. He smiled with satisfaction at the completion of the argument.

Suppose the end of self-cultivation should be fitness to think and work for others? Ah! He sweated under the revelation. What a seer he had become!

The light began to fail, and the husband again returned, this time for his supper and the night. He must be up again at five, he said. Mr. Polk, except now and then when travelling on the Continent, had never been up before nine. Of course, one must get up early, he realized. Nothing can be done by luxurious, easeful people. The best hours of the day are before breakfast; everything is fresh then, and clean and invigorating. Baker must call him—but Baker was going: he had forgotten that. He would buy a silver alarm-clock and rise at five always. One could work then!

But what work? The epigrams, of course; but such an escape as he had had must be celebrated by something really great. No man is spared by Fate in such a way but for some remarkable purpose. He would work seriously for others, anyway. For the poor. He would perhaps build a garden city, where the poor should have sweet surroundings and dental attention. What a mistake his life had been—all expensive preparations for something that never happened. Why was it that rich Americans had that curse laid upon them? But this was the end. He had learnt his lesson. Fate, who never made mistakes, had arranged this accident, this enlightenment, at precisely the psychological moment. The doctor had said he was only shaken; he would be well again in a few days, in his rooms at the Ritz, with the good Sir Truscott to look after him; and then, after a brief holiday abroad, he would begin.

So thinking, he closed his eyes to doze again, and when the motor-car came, a few minutes later, he was dead.

LIFE'S LITTLE DIFFICULTIES*

I. THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

I

*The Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter to his curate, the Rev.
Arthur Starling*

DEAR STARLING,—I am sorry to appear to be running away at this busy season, but a sudden call to London on business leaves me no alternative. I shall be back on Christmas Eve for certain, perhaps before. You must keep an eye on the decorations, and see that none of our helpers get out of hand. I have serious doubts as to Miss Green.—Yours,
L. L.

II

Mrs. Clibborn to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR RECTOR,—I think we have got over the difficulty which we were talking of—Mr. Lulham's red hair and the discord it would make with the crimson decorations. Maggie and Popsy and I have been working like slaves, and have put up a beautiful and effectual screen of evergreen which completely obliterates the keyboard and organist. I think you will be delighted. Mr. Starling approves most cordially.—Yours sincerely,
MARY CLIBBORN

* From *Character and Comedy*.

III

Miss Pitt to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

MY DEAR MR. LIDBETTER,—We are all so sorry you have been called away, a strong guiding hand being never more needed. You will remember that it was arranged that I should have sole charge of the memorial window to Colonel Soper—we settled it just outside the Post Office on the morning that poor Blades was kicked by the Doctor's pony. Well, Miss Lockie now says that Colonel Soper's window belongs to her, and she makes it impossible for me to do anything. I must implore you to write to her putting it right, or the decorations will be ruined. Mr. Starling is kind, but quite useless.—Yours sincerely,
VIRGINIA PITT

IV

Miss Lockie to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

MY DEAR MR. LIDBETTER,—I am sorry to have to trouble you in your enforced rest, but the interests of the church must not be neglected, and you ought to know that Miss Pitt not only insists that the decoration of Colonel Soper's window was entrusted to her, but prevents me carrying it out. If you recollect, it was during tea at Mrs. Millstone's that it was arranged that I should be responsible for this window. A telegram to Miss Pitt would put the matter right at once. Dear Mr. Starling is always so nice, but he does so lack firmness.—Yours sincerely,
MABEL LOCKIE

V

Mrs. St. John to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR RECTOR,—I wish you would let Miss Green have a line about the decoration of the pulpit. It

is no use any of us saying anything to her since she went to the Slade School and acquired artistic notions, but a word from you would work wonders. What we all feel is that the pulpit should be bright and gay, with some cheerful texts on it, a suitable setting for you and your helpful Christmas sermon, but Miss Green's idea is to drape it entirely in black muslin and purple, like a lying-in-state. One can do wonders with a little cotton-wool and a few yards of Turkey twill, but she will not understand this. How with all her Impressionist ideas she got permission to decorate the pulpit at all I cannot think, but there it is, and the sooner she is stopped the better. Poor Mr. Starling drops all the hints he can, but she disregards them all.—Yours sincerely,

CHARLOTTE ST. JOHN

VI

Miss Olive Green to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR MR. LIDBETTER,—I am sure you will like the pulpit. I am giving it the most careful thought, and there is every promise of a scheme of austere beauty, grave and solemn and yet just touched with a note of happier fulfilment. For the most part you will find the decorations quite conventional—holly and evergreens, the old terrible cotton-wool snow on crimson background. But I am certain that you will experience a thrill of satisfied surprise when your eyes alight upon the simple gravity of the pulpit's drapery and its flowing sensuous lines. It is so kind of you to give me this opportunity to realise some of my artistic self. Poor Mr. Starling, who is entirely Victorian in his views of art, has been talking to me about gay colours, but my work is done for you and the few who can *understand*.—Yours sincerely,

OLIVE GREEN

VII

Mrs. Millstone to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR RECTOR,—Just a line to tell you of a delightful device I have hit upon for the decorations. Cotton-wool, of course, makes excellent snow, and rice is sometimes used, on gum, to suggest winter too. But I have discovered that the most perfect illusion of a white rime can be obtained by wetting the leaves and then sprinkling flour on them. I am going to get all the others to let me finish off everything like that on Christmas Eve (like varnishing-day at the Academy, my husband says), when it will be all fresh for Sunday. Mr. Starling, who is proving himself such a dear, is delighted with the scheme. I hope you are well in that dreadful foggy city.—Yours sincerely,
ADA MILLSTONE

VIII

Mrs. Hobbs, charwoman, to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

HONOURED SIR,—I am writing to you because Hobbs and me dispare of getting any justice from the so-called ladies who have been turning the holy church of St. Michael and all Angels into a Covent Garden market. To sweep up holly and other green stuff I don't mind, because I have heard you say year after year that we should all do our best at Christmas to help each other. I always hold that charity and kindness are more than rubys, but when it comes to flour I say no. If you would believe it, Mrs. Millstone is first watering the holly and the lorrel to make it wet, and then sprinkling flour on it to look like hore frost, and the mess is something dreadful, all over the cushions and carpet. To sweep up ordinery dust I don't mind, more particularly as it is my paid work and bounden duty; but unless

it is made worth my while Hobbs says I must say no. We draw the line at sweeping up dough. Mr. Starling is very kind, but as Hobbs says you are the founting head.—Awaiting a reply, I am, your humble servant,
 MARTHA HOBBS

IX

Mrs. Vansittart to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR RECTOR,—If I am late with the north windows you must understand that it is not my fault, but Pedder's. He has suddenly and most mysteriously adopted an attitude of hostility to his employers (quite in the way one has heard of gardeners doing), and nothing will induce him to cut me any evergreens, which he says he cannot spare. The result is that poor Horace and Mr. Starling have to go out with lanterns after Pedder has left the garden, and cut what they can and convey it to the church by stealth. I think we shall manage fairly well, but thought you had better know in case the result is not equal to your anticipation.—Yours sincerely,
 GRACE VANSITTART

X

Mr. Lulham, organist, to the Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter

DEAR SIR,—I shall be glad to have a line from you authorising me to insist upon the removal of a large screen of evergreens which Mrs. Clibborn and her daughters have erected by the organ. There seems to be an idea that the organ is unsightly, although we have had no complaints hitherto, and the effect of this barrier will be to interfere very seriously with the choral part of the service. Mr. Starling sympathises with me, but has not taken any steps.—Believe me, yours faithfully,
 WALTER LULHAM

XI

The Rev. Lawrence Lidbetter to Mrs. Lidbetter

MY DEAREST HARRIET,—I am having, as I expected, an awful time with the decorations, and I send you a batch of letters and leave the situation to you. Miss Pitt had better keep the Soper window. Give the Lockie girl one of the autograph copies of my *Narrow Path*, with a reference underneath my name to the chapter on self-sacrifice, and tell her how sorry I am that there has been a misunderstanding. Mrs. Hobbs must have an extra half-a-crown, and the flouring must be discreetly discouraged—on the ground of waste of food material. Assure Lulham that there shall be no barrier, and then tell Mrs. Clibborn that the organist has been given a pledge that nothing should intervene between his music and the congregation. I am dining with the Lawsons to-night, and we go afterwards to *His Majesty's*, I think,—Your devoted, L.

II. THE CRICKET CLUB CONCERT

I

The Rev. Cæsar Dear to Lady Bird

DEAR LADY BIRD,—It will give so much pleasure in the village if you could see your way to carry out a promise which you very kindly made in the summer, and be the moving spirit in the concert which is to be held on the 19th for the Cricket Club. With the many well-known artistes whom you expressed yourself able to induce to perform, the concert cannot but be an unqualified success, and the new roller assured to us.

I might say that the names of Miss Ellaline Terriss and Miss Gertie Millar, whom you felt confident of getting, when placed before the Cricket Club Committee elicited the warmest enthusiasm. So also did that of Mr. Lewis Waller.—Believe me, dear Lady Bird, yours sincerely,

CÆSAR DEAR

II

Lady Bird to the Rev. Cæsar Dear

DEAR RECTOR,—I am sorry that engagements keep me in town, as I should have liked to have talked this concert over with you. I will certainly manage it; but I have a feeling—mere instinct, perhaps, rather than reason, but I always trust my instinct implicitly, and have never known it fail me: indeed, all my troubles have come from want of faith in it—that to get London performers would be a mistake. After all, this is a village concert, and the rustics will feel much more at home if the performers are their own people. Will

you therefore send me a few names of singers in the neighbourhood to whom I can write? You will be glad to hear that I have prevailed on Sir Julian to tell some stories of Big Game shooting in Nigeria, and my cousin Captain Ide has promised to imitate Mr. Beerbohm Tree. My own contribution will be a share in a little French duologue.—Yours sincerely,
MILLIE BIRD.

III

Lady Bird to Mr. Hall-Hall

Lady Bird having undertaken, at the request of Dr. Dear, to get up the concert on the 17th, she would be enchanted to learn that Mr. Hall-Hall would be willing to give one of his delightful recitations. Mr. Hall-Hall will be glad to hear that Sir Julian has promised to deliver a short address on his experiences with Big Game in Nigeria.

IV

Mr. Hall-Hall to Lady Bird

Mr. Hall-Hall presents his compliments to Lady Bird and will be very glad to assist in the concert on the 17th. He does not, however, recite, as Lady Bird seems to think, but sings bass.

V

Lady Bird to Miss Effie Plumber

Lady Bird presents her compliments to Miss Effie Plumber, and would be very glad if she would sing at the Cricket Club Concert on the 17th. Lady Bird recently heard a very attractive song called "Hyacinth," which she would recommend to Miss

Plumber's notice. Lady Bird herself intends to take part in a short French duologue, and Sir Julian will give the audience the benefit of his Big Game experiences in Nigeria.

VI

Miss Effie Plumber to Lady Bird

Miss Effie Plumber presents her compliments to Lady Bird, and begs to say that she will be pleased to sing at the Cricket Club Concert on the 17th. Miss Effie Plumber thanks Lady Bird for her suggestion, but she is in the habit of singing "The Holy City" and "Jerusalem" on these occasions, with, for an encore, "Daddy," and she cannot see any reason for departing from custom.

VII

The Rev. Cæsar Dear to Lady Bird

DEAR LADY BIRD,—Chancing to meet Miss Plumber this morning, I find that she is under the impression that she is to sing for us on the 17th. I hasten to correct this misapprehension, if it is also yours, because the date is the 19th.—I am, dear Lady Bird,
yours sincerely, CÆSAR DEAR.

VIII

Lady Bird to the Rev. Cæsar Dear

DEAR RECTOR,—Owing to the very unfortunate way in which you made the figure 9 in your first letter about the concert, I took it for a 7, and have asked everyone for the 17th. Will you therefore change the date to that night?—Yours sincerely,
MILLIE BIRD.

IX

The Rev. Cæsar Dear to Lady Bird

MY DEAR LADY BIRD,—I regret exceedingly the ambiguity in the numeral. My writing is usually considered so clear. I regret also that the alteration of the date to the 17th is impossible, for several reasons. I have no doubt, however, that you will be able to get most of those who are helping us to come on the 19th, and to find among your great circle of friends and acquaintance others to take the place of the one or two that cannot. I should like to have a complete list of names as soon as possible.—Believe me, dear Lady Bird, yours sincerely,

CÆSAR DEAR.

Lady Bird to Mr. Hall-Hall

Lady Bird presents her compliments to Mr. Hall-Hall, and regrets to say that, owing to a mistake of the Rector's, the date of the concert was given in her letter as the 17th instead of the 19th. She trusts that the change of evening will make no difference to Mr. Hall-Hall, and that he will still favour the company with one of his charming recitations. Did Lady Bird say in her previous letter that Sir Julian was intending to relate some of his experiences with Big Game?

XI

Lady Bird to the Rev. Cæsar Dear

DEAR RECTOR,—I am very sorry that you will not alter the date. This luckless piece of illegible writing of yours may ruin the whole evening. As my uncle the Archbishop used to say, "Great events

often have the smallest beginnings." But now that the date is the 19th for certain, it must not be changed, and we must do what we can. Perhaps the most unfortunate thing is that, on a little capricious impulse, I decided after all that a slight leaven of the real thing might be good, and asked Mr. Hayden Coffin and Miss Lily Elsie for the 17th, and both promised, saying that that night was the only one that was free to them for months and months. This is truly the irony of fate. At present all I can count on is Sir Julian's Big Game stories, which promise to be very interesting, especially as he is taking lessons in elocution; Captain Ide's imitations of Mr. Beer-bohm Tree; my own share in a little French duologue; and a few local efforts, including one of your friend Mr. Hall-Hall's recitations (not "Ostler Joe," I hope!).—Yours sincerely, MILLIE BIRD

XII

Telegram from the Rev. Cæsar Dear to Lady Bird

Am altering date to 17th to secure Coffin and Elsie.
DEAR

XIII

Telegram from Lady Bird to the Rev. Cæsar Dear

Do not alter date. Have just heard both Coffin and Elsie uncertain. No reliance on artistic temperament.
BIRD

XIV

Mr. Hall-Hall to Lady Bird

Mr. Hall-Hall presents his compliments to Lady Bird, and regrets that he will be unable to assist in the concert on the 19th by reason of an old engagement. Mr. Hall-Hall begs again to assure Lady Bird that he does not recite, but sings bass.

XV

Lady Bird to the Rev. Cæsar Dear

MY DEAR RECTOR,—I am exceedingly sorry, but the responsibility of this concert has worn me to such an extent that Sir Julian insists on our leaving at once for the Riviera. Ever since the discovery of that unfortunate slip of yours in the date, I have felt the strain. I am one of those who cannot take things lightly. I am either all fire or quite cold. I have been all fire for your concert and its dear charitable object, and the result is that I am worn out, consumed. Wreck though that I am, I would persevere with it to the end if Sir Julian would allow it; but he is a rock. I therefore enclose all the correspondence on the subject, which will show you how the case stands and make it very easy for you to complete the arrangements. All the hard work is done.—Believe me, with all good wishes, yours sincerely,

MILLIE BIRD

P.S.—Sir Julian is having his Big Game reminiscences type-written for you to read to the audience. They are most thrilling. I have instructed Grant to send down the lion-skin hearthrug for the evening. It should be hung over a chair so that the two bullet-holes show. There might be a lighted candle behind it with advantage.

VERSES FOR CHILDREN*

THE COCKER SPANIEL

OF all the dogs that are so sweet,
The spaniel is the most complete ;
Of all the spaniels, dearest far
The little Cocker spaniels are.

They're always merry, always hale ;
Their eyes are like October ale ;
They are so loyal and so black ;
So unresentful 'neath the whack ;

They never sulk, they never tire ;
They love the field, they love the fire ;
They never criticise their friends ;
Their every joy all joy transcends.

The Aberdeen is quaint and sly,
A harvest of the anxious eye ;
The Bedlington is blue and true ;
The Airedale fights till death for you ;

The Bob-tail is a jovial chap ;
The Pekingese commands your lap ;
The Dachshund (with the Queen Anne legs)
Your sympathy enchains or begs.

Yet why compare ? All dogs, on earth,
Possess some special charm and worth
But Cocker spaniels ? Every way
They are the canine angels, ah, ah.

* Chiefly from *Another Book of Verses for Children*

THE BLACKSMITH

OUR blacksmith is a stronger man
Than any in the town :
At lifting weights and bending bars,
He has immense renown ;
And no one disagrees with him,
Because he knocks them down.

He never learned to read or write,
Or do the simplest sums.
But what of that ? He'll take a stone
And bite it into crumbs,
Or break a shilling-piece between
His fingers and his thumbs.

He never does a single thing
That copy-books extol,
But if he wants to light his pipe
He picks a glowing coal—
For nothing hurts his hand of iron—
And holds it to the bowl.

His muscles are terrific ! Why,
I'll tell you what he'll do :
He'll let you bind his straightened arm
So tight it turns it blue,
And then he'll bend his elbow up,
And snap the cords in two.

THE BASKET-MAKERS

THE ordinary merchant
 Lives just like you or I ;
 His house is made of brick or stone,
 His rooms are warm and dry ;
 And if we want his merchandise,
 On foot or in a 'bus
 We journey to his shop, because
 His shop won't come to us.

But Basket-making Gipsies
 Consider people more :
 They harness horses to their house
 And bring it to your door ;
 And 'neath the shelter of the trees
 It stands when day is done—
 A kitchen, bedroom, workroom, shop,
 And nursery in one.

The Basket-making Gipsies,
 A pleasant life is theirs,
 Without the sameness of a street,
 The weariness of stairs—
 They've every day another ride,
 Another town to see,
 And, in the shade beside the road,
 Another picnic tea.

HOLLAND

THE cottages of Holland,
They are so sweet and clean
Not even with a microscope
Can trace of dirt be seen.

The kitchens of those cottages,
They are so neat and bright
With pots and pans of polished brass,
And plates of blue and white.

The housewives get up early,
The housewives sit up late,
For fear a little speck of dust
Should wander through the gate.

So, all you little children
Who never wipe your shoes,
If you would go to Holland, why;
That habit you must lose.

THE CONJUROR

WHEN I am a man and can do as I wish,
With no one to ask if I may,
Although I'll play cricket a little, and fish,
I'll conjure the most of each day.

The conjuror's life is so easy and grand ;
He makes such superior jokes—
O, it's splendid to stand with a wand in your hand,
And puzzle relations and folks.

If eggs should be wanted, you turn to a friend
And draw two or three from his hair ;
If a rabbit is wished, and his hat he will lend,
You wave, and behold, one is there !

To pound a gold watch into thousands of bits,
And restore it as good as before,
Is a life that beats even a Major's to fits—
Apart from the absence of gore.

RAILWAY MEN

I

SUPPOSE the chance were given to me
A man on a railway line to be—
To make up my mind would be fearfully hard
'Twixt Station-master and Engine-driver,
Signalman, Stoker, and Guard.

II

The Station-master's exceedingly grand :
He settles a thing with a wave of his hand,
His coat is trimmed with the finest gold,
And his porters do whatever they're told.
A Station-master I'd like to be,
With no one to ever say no to me.

III

The Driver's a man of the worthiest type,
Who leans on the engine and smokes his pipe,
Or sends her along, if he feels inclined,
Twice as fast as the fastest wind ;
Who sits by the fire if it rains or freezes
And blows the whistle whenever he pleases.
An Engine-driver I'd like to be,
At a mile a minute to far Dundee.

IV

The Signalman leans from his box on high
And waves his hand as expresses go by ;
One pull at his handle will stop a train,
Another will send it along again.
He's pulling those handles from morning to night;
And it's all his doing that trains go right.
A Signalman bold I'd like to be,
And wave my hand to the 7.3.

V

The Stoker stands by the engine fire
And feeds the flames to their full desire.
At night he opens the furnace door,
And the train tears by with a glare and a roar.
He oils the engine from time to time,
And covers himself with grease and grime,
Then cleans his hands in an absent way
On a piece of rag as dirty as they.
An Engine-stoker I'd like to be,
Except for the bother of washing for tea.

VI

The Guard has a watch that is always right,
And a bull's-eye lantern to use at night,
A flag to wave, and a whistle to blow,
And he jumps on the train when it's started to go
A Guard has a beautiful van to himself,
With dogs on the floor and cold tea on the shelf;
He's strong, and he's kind, and he's also willing,
If people insist, to accept a shilling.
A railway Guard I should love to be—
The life of a Guard is the life for me.

VII

The Station-master is all very well,
But one might get tired of being a swell.
The Signalman's box is enormously small,
And he's never permitted to leave it at all.
The Driver and Stoker get terribly cold
And are shaken to pieces before they're half old.
But the Guard, the Guard, is happy and free,
And the life of the Guard is the life for me.

THE SHIPBUILDER

SUCH noise is in a shipwright's yard
When everyone is working hard.

Good oak is falling everywhere :
Hark how the saws it's fibres tear !

The planks scream out beneath the planes,
The knots endure terrific pains.

The air is throbbing with the din
As nail on nail is hammered in.

With every nail that's driven home
The ship is nearer to the foam.

"Then haste ! Then haste ! Ply, hammers, ply !"
Impatiently the wavelets cry :

"The ship is ours, to bear in glee
From port to port across the sea !

"Make haste ! Make haste ! We're waiting now :
We long to crisp around her prow.

"Plant deep her mast, sew well her sails,
Against our stiff October gales.

"And, shipwright, sturdy make her form,
Against the dark December storm !"

THE GAMEKEEPER

TO make the keeper's moleskin vest
A hundred moles have died ;
The keeper's coat is velveteen,
With pockets deep and wide,
And many is the bird and beast
That finds its way inside.

Supposing we might turn them out
We'd find, perhaps, to-day,
A sparrow-hawk, an owl, a stoat,
A weasel, and a jay—
To keep the pheasants free from harm
So much there is to slay !

While you and I are still in bed
The keeper's on his rounds :
There's not a tree he doesn't know
Within his master's bounds ;
He knows the call of every bird,
And all the woodland sounds.

And though he puts up notice boards
With " Trespassers, beware ! "
And though his gun is always cocked,
He's not at all a bear,
He gave us once a pair of doves,
And once a baby hare.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

THE heroes of Christmas are many, and most
Are the subjects of eulogy, guerdon or toast.
For example, the postman with gladdening knocks
Is gratefully handed his annual box ;
While the butcher-boy, baker-boy, grocer-boy, each
Carries off a reward that is better than speech.
There are others no less that we try to " remember "
On whom we depend towards the end of December ;
Yet two must be named who have never as yet
Been properly thanked by a world in their debt :
Two toilers without whose assiduous zeal
The warmth of our hearts would be bound to congeal,
Our generous promptings be fated to slumber,
And the giving of presents become a back number.

" Who *are* they," you ask, " that their praise we may
sing ? "

Well, the one makes brown paper, the other makes
string.

Brown paper and string !

Brown paper and string !

Oh, where should we be when the Christmas bells
ring

If it weren't for supplies of brown paper and string ?

BRITTANY

IN Brittany the churches
 All day are open wide;
 That anyone who wishes to
 May pray or rest inside.
 The priests have rusty cassocks,
 The priests have shaven chins,
 And poor old bodies go to them
 With lists of little sins.

In Brittany the churches
 Are cool and white and quaint,
 With here and there a crucifix
 And here and there a saint ;
 And here and there a little shrine,
 With candles short or tall
 That Bretons light for love of Him
 The Lord who loveth all.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE LINE OF POETRY*

(A STORY FOR CHILDREN)

[A family of children having suddenly acquired a caravan completely furnished (called *The Slowcoach*) were allowed by their mother to make a fortnight's tour in it in Oxfordshire, Berkshire and the neighbouring country, with one or two young friends as companions and an ancient gardener to drive and take care of them. The episodes which follow began just outside Cirencester and finished in the town itself.]

ON the next morning, which was Sunday, Jack hurried through his dressing and washing at a great pace and instantly disappeared. The others were just beginning breakfast when he came rushing up in a state of wild excitement, calling, "Kink! Kink!"

"What is it?" said that leisurely man.

"It's a rabbit!" cried Jack. "I've caught it, and I don't know how to kill it."

"Oh, Jack," said Mary, jumping up, "don't kill it! Why should it be killed?"

"For supper, of course," said Jack. "Come on, Kink! Quick, or it will get away!"

* From *The Slowcoach*.

They all left their breakfast and followed Jack, and when they came up to him he was kneeling over a kicking object.

"Oh, Kink," he said, "do hold it and kill it! How do you do it? The gipsy boy didn't show me properly."

"The gipsy boy?" said Mary.

"Yes, he gave me a wire. See, it's round its neck. That's how I caught him. Do kill him, Kink!"

"Please don't do anything of the kind," said Janet. "We don't want to eat rabbits we catch like that."

"No," said Hester, "please don't kill it. Please let it go."

"What mollicoddles you are!" said Jack. "How do you suppose rabbits are killed, anyway? You eat them all right when they're cooked."

"I couldn't eat a rabbit that I had seen struggling alive," said Janet.

"No," said Mary. "Oh, Jack, please let him go! You've caught him, and that's the great thing; and now be merciful."

Kink still held the struggling creature.

"I vote he's let loose again," said Robert. "I don't want any of him."

"No, and I'm sure I don't," said Gregory; "but wouldn't it be fun to keep him in a hutch?"

"Wild rabbits are no good in hutches," said Kink.

Jack was very sullen. "It's awful rot," he said. "You all ought to be vegetarians if you talk like that. But we'll let him go," and he loosened the wire and the rabbit dashed away.

"A nice return to the gipsy for his kindness," Jack muttered.

Kink watched the rabbit till it was out of sight. "Whose rabbit do you suppose that was?" he asked.

"Mine," said Jack.

"What about the farmer?" said Kink. "A nice return for a night's lodging—poaching his rabbits."

"Poaching!" cried Horace. "Is that poaching? Is Jack a poacher? Oh, how splendid! Jack's a poacher! Jack's a poacher! I wish I was."

"I'd never thought of it as poaching," said Jack, who was not a little proud of his new character.

"When did you set the wire?" Horace asked him.

"Late last night," said Jack. "After you had turned in."

"Wasn't it pitch dark?" Horace asked.

"There was a moon," said Jack, feeling twice his ordinary size.

"But what did you do?" Horace asked.

"Well," said Jack, "I had noticed some rabbits in that field on our way back from Cirencester, so I just crept off in the dark and found a hole, and took a strong stick and drove that into the ground, and then fixed the wire to it with the noose open, like this, so that the rabbit would run right into it when it came out. And it did! Poaching's frightfully simple."

"Yes," said Horace, "but it wants courage."

"Oh yes," said Jack lightly. "Of course one mustn't be a fool or a coward."

It was arranged that Janet and Jack and Robert and Hester should go to church, and Mary and the others stay behind to cook.

Mary worked very hard over the Sunday dinner, and a great surprise was waiting for the four church-goers—nothing less than a beefsteak pudding with the most perfect soft crust and heaps of juice; and afterwards pancakes. The farmer's wife sent down some strawberries and cream, so that it was a real feast. The only one of them that was not hungry was Mary, who was too hot and tired of cooking to be able to eat much.

In spite of this huge and momentous dinner, all the children went out on Sunday afternoon to explore

the neighbourhood, except Hester, who said she had something very important to do, and begged to be allowed to remain alone in the Slowcoach. Kink said that he would stay there, too.

On the other side of Cirencester is a very beautiful park, with a broad avenue through it from the gates right in the town itself. The farmer's wife had told them of its attractions, and also of a ruined house known as Alfred's Hall, and a point called the Seven Ways, where seven green avenues met, and a canal that ran through a tunnel, and, all within the possibilities of good walkers, the source of the Thames itself. "And," said she, "after you have seen that—the tiny spring which makes that wonderful river that runs right through London—oh, I've been to London in my time!—you can come back to Cirencester by the Fosse Way—the Roman road to Bath."

They could not, of course, see all these things, but they went to the ruined house, which was very romantic and exactly the place for Hester had she only been with them; and they roamed about the park, which was very vast and wonderful.

They had a little adventure, too, for as they were walking along, on the way back—coming back, of course, by a different way, for Robert could not bear the thought of not doing so—Mary chanced to say, with reference to the plans for the future which Robert was describing:

"To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new,"

that being her idea of the last line of Milton's "Lycidas," which they had all learned quite recently.

"Not 'fresh fields,'" Janet corrected, "'fresh woods.'"

"'Fields,'" said Mary.

"'Woods,'" said Janet.

"I'm sure it's 'fields,'" said Mary.

"But it's silly," said Janet, "to say 'fresh fields and pastures new,' because they mean the same

thing. 'Fresh woods' would mean something different."

"I can't help it," said Mary; "that's Milton's affair. 'Fresh fields.'"

Janet called to Robert. "Is it 'fresh fields and pastures new,' or 'fresh woods and pastures new'?" she asked him.

"'Fresh fields,' he said.

Janet asked Jack. "I don't know," he said, "but 'fresh woods' sounds more sensible."

"Oh dear," said Janet, "I wish we had a Milton!"

"Well, we haven't," said Robert, "and you're not likely to find one at Cirencester to-day, unless, of course, the vicar has one."

"Oh yes," said Janet, "of course—the vicar. He's certain to have one."

"But who'll ask him?" said Horace.

"Janet will," said Mary.

"Oh no," said Janet.

"Well, it's your affair," said Robert.

"Not more than Mary's," said Janet. "Mary, will you ask him?"

"No," said Mary, "I don't think I could. Not the vicar. I might be willing to ask the curate."

"What a ripping idea!" said Jack. "Of course the curate would be much easier. We'll ask where he lives."

They did so at a small tobacconist's that was open, and found that the curate had rooms at Myrtle Villa, quite close by.

They therefore marched towards Myrtle Villa, but first arranged to draw lots to see who should ring the bell and make the inquiry. They tore up paper of different sizes, and it was agreed that the holders of the longest and the shortest pieces should go—the longest to put the question, the shortest to ring and lend support. The result was that Mary drew the longest and Gregory the smallest.

Gregory was furious. "I don't even know what it's all about," he complained.

They told him.

"How rotten!" he said. "What's it matter?"

Mary, however, led him off to the house, and he rang the bell with vigour.

A smiling girl opened the door and asked what they wanted.

"Is the curate at home?" Mary asked.

The girl said that he was.

"Will you ask him if he will speak to us for a moment?" said Mary.

"What about?" asked the girl. "He has a friend with him."

"I don't think you'd understand if we told you," said Mary.

"I must know what it's about," said the girl. "He doesn't like to be disturbed on Sunday afternoons."

"Has he got a lot of books—poetry books?" Gregory asked.

"Yes," said the girl, "heaps."

"Then it's about Milton," said Mary.

"Milton the baker!" exclaimed the girl. "He's not dead, is he?"

"Milton the poet," said Mary.

"I'm all in a maze," said the girl. "I don't know what you're talking about. But I suppose I'd better tell him."

The girl left them on the mat and knocked at a door just inside.

"Come in," said a man's voice.

"Please, sir," said the girl, "there are two children asking about someone named Milton."

The owner of the voice laughed. "Are they?" he said. "Well, they've come to the right shop." And then the door opened wider and a tall and handsome young man came out, dressed in a cricket blazer over a clergyman's waistcoat and collar, and smoking a large pipe.

"What's all this about Milton?" he said cheerily.

"What Milton? Not the poet?"

"Yes," said Mary.

"Oh, I say, this is too good," said the young clergyman. "Vernon," he called out, "come here and see a deputation from Milton."

Another young man joined him, equally pleasant-looking, and they all shook hands.

"Come inside," said the young clergyman.

"There are four others waiting in the road," said Gregory.

"Then fetch them in too," said the young clergyman. And Janet and Robert and Jack and Horace were brought in.

"Now," said the young clergyman, "have some tea." And he rang the bell and ordered enough tea for eight.

When the girl had gone, he asked for full particulars, and then gave his verdict.

"'Fresh woods and pastures new.'"

"Oh, rubbish!" said Vernon. "I've always learned 'fresh fields and pastures new.'"

"That's what I say," said Mary.

"And so do I," said Robert and Horace.

"I think *you're* right," said Janet to the young clergyman.

"Well," he said, "I'll look it up." And he began to hunt for Milton on his shelves.

"Oh, not yet!" said Vernon. "Let's have some fun first. Let's see who are the 'fielders' and who are the 'wooders.' All 'fielders' this way."

Mary, Robert, and Horace ranged themselves beside him, leaving Janet and Jack with the young clergyman, whom Vernon called Rod.

Gregory looked at both sides, and did not move.

"Haven't you any views about it?" asked Vernon.

"No," said Gregory; "I never heard the thing before. What does it matter?"

"Very well, then," said Rod; "here's the tea. You pour it out for us. I like three lumps of sugar in mine. Now," he continued, "the rout of the

'fielders' is about to begin. Of course it's 'woods.' Why, I can see the word now in Milton's own handwriting, as I used to see it in the Library at Trinity."

"I'm so sure it's 'fields,'" said Vernon, "that I declare myself willing to go without cake for tea if it isn't."

"Will you put half a crown in the plate next Sunday if it's 'woods'?" said Rod.

"Oh, I say, that's a bit stiff," said Vernon. "Half a crown?"

"Very well, then," said Rod, "two bob. Will you put two bob in the plate next Sunday if it's 'woods'?"

"Yes, I will," said Vernon. "But if it's 'fields,' what will you do? You mayn't take a shilling out?"

"No," said Rod; "if it's 'fields' I'll eat my best hat."

"I hope it's 'fields,'" said Gregory.

"Horrid little boy!" said Rod. "But now we'll see."

He opened Milton slowly, and turned over the pages of "Lycidas." "Ha! ha!" he said; "no cake for Charles Vernon, Esquire, and two bob for Mother Church. And my best hat saved. Listen:

'At last he rose and twitch'd his mantle blue:
To-morrow to fresh woods, and pastures new.'

"No cake!" groaned Vernon. "Repulsive children!" he continued tragically. "Why did you knock at this unhappy door and ask your foolish question here? Are there no other houses in Cirencester? No cake! No cake!"

They screamed with laughter.

"I like them," said Rod. "They're nice children. I hope they'll come again. And now for a large tea, with plenty of cake for all but one of us."

They would have liked to stay a long time, for Rod and Vernon were very kind and amusing, but Janet had Hester on her mind, left alone in the

Slowcoach ; and so directly tea was finished they said good-bye.

When Hester was told about their adventure, she said : " How silly you all are ! "

" Why ? " they asked indignantly.

" For two reasons," said Hester. " One is that it is, of course, ' fresh woods.' Anyone ought to know that. And the other is that we've got the ' Blue Poetry Book ' with it in, here in the caravan."

" That doesn't matter," said Gregory. " We met a jolly decent clergyman."

THE THOUSAND THREE-PENNY BITS*

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

I

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl named Alison Muirhead, and she had a doll named Rosamund and a dog named Thomson.

Alison used to take her doll and Thomson every day into Kensington Gardens, and when they were well inside the Gardens, opposite the tulips and the new statue of William III, she used to unclasp the catch of Thomson's lead and let him run, doing her best to keep an eye on him. This was not easy, for Thomson was a sociable dog, and he rushed after every other dog he saw, and either told them the latest dog joke or heard it, and Alison was often in despair to get him back.

If, however, Thomson had been an angel of a dog, this story would never have been written, because it was wholly owing to his naughtiness that Alison and the Old Gentleman met.

The Old Gentleman used also to go into the Gardens on every fine day, and sit on one of the seats by the may trees between the long bulb walk and the Round Pond, with his back to the Albert Memorial. Not that he was one of those persons who always click their tongues when the Albert Memorial is mentioned,

* From *Anne's Terrible Good Nature*.

for, as a matter of fact, he did not mind the gold on it at all, and he really liked the groups of Asia and Europe and India at the corners, with the nice friendly elephant and camel in them ; but he turned his back on the Memorial because the seat was set that way, and he liked also, when he raised his eyes from his book, to see so much green grass, and in the distance the yachtsmen running round the Round Pond to prevent their vessels wrecking themselves on the cement.

Alison had noticed the Old Gentleman for a long time before they had become acquainted, and he had noticed her and was much attracted by her quiet little ways with Rosamund, and her calm, if despairing, pursuit of Thomson ; and he liked her, too, for never playing diaboló.

But it was not until one day that Thomson broke loose at the very gate of the Gardens with his lead still on him, and in course of time ran right under the Old Gentleman's legs and caught the chain in one of the eyelet flaps of his laced boots, that Alison and he came to speak.

" Ha, ha ! " said the Old Gentleman to Thomson, " I've got you now. And I shall hold you tight till your mistress comes."

Alison was still a long way off. Thomson said nothing, but tugged at the chain.

" I've been watching you for a long time, Mr. Thomson," said the Old Gentleman, " and I have come to the conclusion that you are a bad dog. You don't care for anyone. You do what you want to do and nothing else." Thomson lay down and put out a yard and a half of pink tongue. Alison came nearer.

" If you were my dog," the Old Gentleman continued, " do you know what I should do ? I should thrash you." Thomson began to snore.

Alison at this point came up, and Thomson sprang to his feet and affected to be pleased to see her.

" Thank you ever so much," Alison said to the Old Gentleman. " But how ever did you catch him ? "

"I didn't catch him," said the Old Gentleman; "he caught me. Come and sit down and rest yourself."

So Alison sat down, and Thomson laid his wicked cheek against her boot, and that was the beginning of the acquaintance.

The next day when she went into the Gardens, Alison looked for the Old Gentleman, and sure enough, there he was, and seeing there was no one beside him, she sat down there again. And for a little while on every fine day she sat with him, and they talked of various things. He was very interesting: he knew a great deal about birds and flowers and foreign countries. He had not only lived in China, but had explored the Amazon. On his watch-chain was a blue stone which an Indian snake-charmer had given him. But he lived now in the big hotel at the corner of the Gardens, and all his wanderings were over.

The funniest thing about him was his name. Alison did not learn what it was for a long time, but one day, as she was calling "Thomson! Thomson!" very loudly as they sat there, the Old Gentleman said, "When you do that it makes me nervous."

"Why?" Alison asked.

"Because," the Old Gentleman said, "my name's Thomson, too."

"Oh, I'm so sorry," Alison said; "I must call Thomson—I mean my dog—something else. I can't ever call him Thomson again."

"Why not?" said the Old Gentleman. "It doesn't matter at all. I can't expect to be the only Thomson in the world."

"Oh, yes," said Alison, "I shall." ●

The next day the first thing she did when she saw the Old Gentleman was to tell him she had changed Thom—the dog's name. "In future," she said, "he is to be called Jimmie."

The Old Gentleman laughed. "That's my name, too," he said.

II

ONE day the Old Gentleman was not in his accustomed place ; and it was a very fine day, too. Alison was disappointed, and even Thomson, I mean Jimmie, I mean the Aberdeen terrier, seemed to miss something.

And the next day he was not there.

And the next.

And then came Sunday, when Alison went to church, and afterwards for a rather dull walk with her father, strictly on the paths, past " Physical Energy " to the Serpentine, to look at the peacocks, and then back again by the Albert Memorial, and so home. Monday and Tuesday were both wet, and on Wednesday it was a whole week since Alison had seen the Old Gentleman ; but to her grief he was again absent.

And so, having her mother's permission, the next day she called at the hotel. She had the greatest difficulty in getting in, because it was the first time that either she or her dog had ever been through a revolving door ; but at last they came safely into the hall, into the presence of a tall porter in a uniform of splendour.

" Can you tell me if Mr. James Thomson is still staying here ? " Alison asked.

" I am sorry to say, missy," replied the porter, " that Mr. Thomson died last week."

Poor Alison.

III

ONE morning, some few weeks afterwards, Alison found on her plate a letter addressed to herself in a strange handwriting. After wondering about it for some moments, she opened it. The letter ran thus :

Re Mr. James Thomson, deceased.

To Miss Alison Muirhead :

Dear Madam—We beg to inform you that, in accordance with the last will and testament of our

client, the late Mr. James Thomson, there lies at our office a packet containing a thousand threepenny bits, being a legacy which he devised to yourself, free of duty, in a codicil added a few days before his death. We should state that, by the terms of the bequest, it was our client's wish that five hundred of the threepenny bits should be spent by you for others within a year of its receipt, and not put away against a maturer age; the remaining five hundred he wished to be spent by yourself, for yourself, and for yourself alone, also within the year. The parcel is at your service whenever it is convenient to you to call for it.

We are, dear madam,
Yours faithfully,
LEE, LEE AND LEE.

Alison was too bewildered to take it all in on the first reading, and her father therefore read it again, and explained some of the words, which perhaps your father will do for you.

But if Alison was bewildered, it was nothing to her mother's state, which was one of amazement and pride too.

"To think of it!" she cried.

"Well, I never heard of such a thing in my life!" she said.

"It's like something in a book or a play!" she exclaimed.

"A thousand threepenny bits! Why, that's—let me see—yes, it's—why, it's twelve pounds ten," she remarked.

As for Mr. Muirhead, he was pleased, too; but him it seemed to amuse more than surprise.

"After your lessons this morning," he said, "instead of going for a walk you can come into the city to me, and we'll go to the lawyers' together, and then have lunch at Birch's."

When they reached the lawyers' office Alison and her father were shown into a large room with three

grave gentlemen in it, whom Alison supposed were Lee, Lee and Lee ; and all the time that her father was talking to them she wondered which was *the* Lee, and which was the second Lee, and which was "and Lee." Then she had to sign a paper, and then one of the Lees gave her a canvas bag containing a thousand threepenny bits.

"Of course you would like to count them," he said ; and Alison replied, "Yes," at which everyone laughed, because Mr. Lee had meant it for a joke, and Alison had taken it seriously. But how could she expect that Mr. Thomson's lawyer, or, indeed, any lawyer of a dead friend, would make a joke ?

"I'm afraid," said Mr. Lee, when they had done laughing, "that you would be very tired of the job before you were half-way through it. Count them when you get home, and if there is any mistake we will put it right ; but one of our most careful clerks has already gone through them very thoroughly."

Then they all shook hands, and each of the three Lees said something playful.

The one that Alison guessed was Lee said, "Don't be extravagant and buy the moon."

The one that Alison guessed was the second Lee said, "If at any time you get tired of so much money, we shall be pleased to have it again."

While "and Lee" looked very solemn, and said, "Now you can go to church a thousand times."

Then they all laughed again, and Alison and her father were shown out into the street by a little sharp boy, whose eyes were fixed so keenly on the canvas bag that Alison was quite certain that he was the most careful clerk who had done the counting.

After they had been to lunch at Birch's, where they had real turtle soup and oyster patties, they went home, and Alison poured all the threepenny bits into a depression in a cushion from the sofa, and counted them into a hundred piles of ten each. Then she got a wooden writing-desk, which had been given her by her grandmother, and emptied out all the

treasures it contained, and put fifty of the little heaps into the large part of the writing-case, and the remaining fifty little heaps into the compartment for pens and sealing-wax, and locked it up again.

IV

FOR the next few days Alison collected advice about the spending of her money from everyone she knew. All her friends were asked to give their opinion, and thus gradually she decided upon the best way to spend the five hundred threepenny bits which were for others.

Her first thought was naturally for her mother, who was an invalid. Mrs. Muirhead was very fond of flowers, and so Alison went at once to see the old flower-woman who sits outside Kensington High Street Station, and who was so cross with the Suffragettes in self-denial week for interfering with her "pitch," as she called it; and Alison arranged with her for a threepenny bunch of whatever was in season to be taken to her mother twice every week, on Saturdays and Wednesdays, for a year, and, to the old woman's intense astonishment, she gave her one hundred and four of her threepenny bits.

Her Uncle Mordaunt advised her to take in a weekly illustrated paper—say *The Sphere*—and, after she had looked at it herself, to send it to one of the lighthouses, where the men are very lonely and unentertained. Alison thought this was a very good idea. *The Sphere* cost two threepences a week, and postage a halfpenny, or one hundred and twelve threepences—altogether one pound eight shillings.

Alison had now spent two hundred and sixteen threepenny bits, and, having arranged these two things, she decided to wait till Christmas came nearer (it was now July) before she spent any more large sums, always, however, keeping a few threepenny bits handy in her purse in case of meeting any particularly hard case, such as a very blind man, or a

begging mother with a dreadfully cold little baby, or a Punch and Judy man with a really nice face, or a little boy who had fallen down and hurt himself badly, or an old woman who ought to be riding in a bus. In this way she got rid of fifty of her little coins before Christmas came near enough for her once more to think of little else but threepenny plans.

It was then that she found Tommy Cathcart so useful. Tommy Cathcart was one of her father's pupils, and it was he who reminded Alison of the claims of sandwichmen. Sandwichmen have an awfully bad time, Tommy explained to her. It is almost the last thing men do. No one carries sandwich-boards until he has failed in every other way.

After talking it over very seriously, they went together to a tobacconist near the Strand, who undertook to make up thirty little packets for threepence each, containing a clay pipe and tobacco, and these Tommy Cathcart and she slipped into the hands of the sandwichmen as they drifted by in Regent Street, in the Strand, and in Oxford Street, while the rest were given to a little group of the men who were resting, with their sandwich-boards leaned against the wall, in a court near Shaftesbury Avenue.

"Don't you think," Alison said, "that those who carry a notice over the head as well ought to have more?"

But Tommy Cathcart thought not.

That exhausted seven-and-sixpence.

Another thing that Alison and Tommy Cathcart did was to knock at the door of the cabmen's shelter opposite De Vere Gardens and ask if she might present a few puddings for Christmas Day. The man said she might, and that used up seven-and-sixpence—three puddings at a half-a-crown, thirty threepences.

The other people to whom Alison sent Christmas presents with Mr. Thomson's money were the children

of the boatmen who had taken out her and her father and her cousins, Harry and Francis Frend, in the Isle of Wight last year. These boatmen were two brothers named Fagg—Jack and Willy Fagg—and their boat was the “Seamew.” Jack had four children and Willy six, and Alison used to go and see them now and then. After much consideration she sent four threepenny bits to each of these children, a shilling pipe, with real silver on it, to Jack and Willy, and a pound of two-shilling tea to Mrs. Jack and Mrs. Willy. That made sixteen shillings, or sixty-four threepenny bits.

Just then Alison had an unexpected piece of luck, for as she was passing a shop in Westbourne Grove she saw a window full of mittens at threepence a pair, sale price. Now, mittens are just the thing for cabmen in winter—cabmen and crossing-sweepers and errand boys. So Alison bought thirty pairs, or seven-and-sixpence worth, and she gave a pair to each of the boys that called regularly—the butcher’s boy, and the baker’s boy, and the grocer’s boy, and a pair to the milkman, and a pair to the crossing-sweeper, and the rest were put in the hall for cabmen who brought her father home or took him out.

And then, just as they were getting rather in despair, one afternoon Tommy Cathcart came home with a brilliant idea.

“Smith,” he said, “is the commonest name in England. In every workhouse in England,” he said. “there must be one Smith he least. Why not,” he said, “get, say, sixty picture post-cards and send them addressed to Mrs. Smith or Mr. Smith, or plain Smith, to sixty workhouses? We can get,” he said, “the names from ‘Bradshaw.’ A person in a workhouse will be awfully excited to get a Christmas card, and if,” he said, “there happens to be no Smith, someone else will have it.”

Alison liked the idea very much, and so they went off to a shop in the Strand absolutely full of picture post-cards and bought sixty at a penny each. They

had some little difficulty in choosing, because Tommy Cathcart wanted a certain number to be photographs of Pauline Chase and other pretty people, but Alison said that views of London would be better, since most persons knew London, and the card would remind them of old times. As it was, so to speak, her money, Alison got her own way. Then they bought sixty halfpenny stamps, and returned home to find the towns in "Bradshaw" and send them off. That all came to seven-and-six, or thirty threepenny bits.

Then Alison had a very brilliant inspiration—to give Jimmie a beautiful silver collar all for himself, with the words "In memory of James Thomson" on it, as a Christmas present. Dogs have so few presents, and Jimmie really was very good, except when he lost his head in the Gardens, which, indeed, to be truthful, he always did. So he had his collar on Christmas morning, and it cost exactly twelve-and-six altogether, or fifty threepenny bits.

So much for the first five hundred.

V

ALISON had then to lay out the second five hundred, or £6 5s., on herself, and herself alone. This was easier. She and her father spent three afternoons among the old furniture shops of Kensington and the Brompton Road, and at last came upon the very thing they were looking for in the back room of a shop close to the Oratory, kept by an elderly Jewish lady with a perfectly gigantic nose and rings on every finger.

This was an old bureau writing-desk, with drawers, and a flap to pull down to write on, and lots of pigeon-holes, and a very strong lock. Also a secret drawer. After some bargaining Mr. Muirhead got it for six pounds, which left five shillings for writing paper and sealing-wax and blotting-paper and nibs.

THE THOUSAND THREEPENNY BITS 189

And that was the end of the thousand threepenny bits, as this balance-sheet shows.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

FIRST ACCOUNT—FOR OTHER PEOPLE

	Three-pences.	£	s.	d.
A year's flowers for mother, twice a week, at 3d. a bunch - - -	104	1	6	0
<i>The Sphere</i> for a year - - -	104	1	6	0
Postage of same to a lighthouse - -	8	0	2	0
Odd threepenny bits given to unhappy people in the streets, etc. - - -	50	0	12	6
Tobacco and pipes to thirty sandwich-men, at 3d. each - - -	30	0	7	6
Three Christmas puddings for the cabmen's shelter near De Vere Gardens, at 2s. 6d. - - -	30	0	7	6
Ten Fagg children, at 1s. each - -	40	0	10	0
Two pipes for Jack and Willy Fagg, at 1s. - - -	8	0	2	0
Two pounds tea for Mrs. Jack and Mrs. Willy, at 2s. - - -	16	0	4	0
Thirty pairs mittens for cabmen, etc.	30	0	7	6
Sixty picture postcards for the Smith family at 1d., and postage at ½d. -	30	0	7	6
Silver collar for Jimmie, with engraving	50	0	12	6
	<hr/>			
	500	6	5	0

SECOND ACCOUNT—FOR ALISON MUIRHEAD HERSELF

	Three-pences.	£	s.	d.
Old bureau - - - - -	480	6	0	0
Writing-paper, etc. - - - - -	20	0	5	0
	<hr/>			
	500	6	5	0
First account total - - - - -	500	6	5	0
	<hr/>			
Grand total - - - - -	1,000	12	10	0

Audited and found correct,

(Signed) THOMAS W. CATHCART.

At least not quite the end, as I will tell you. The face of the old Jewess, when the time came to pay for the bureau and Alison took forty-eight little packets of ten threepenny bits each out of her bag and laid them on the table, was a picture of perplexity and amusement.

"Well, ma tear, what's that?" she asked.

"Four hundred and eighty threepenny bits—six pounds," said Alison.

"But, ma tear, what will I do with all the little money?"

"It's all I've got," said Alison.

"You see," said Mr. Muirhead—and then he told the old lady with the big nose the story.

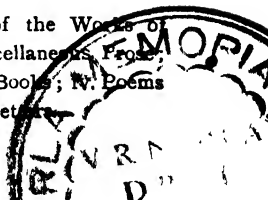
And what do you think she did? "Well, ma tear," she said, "I can't let you go away without something left, in case you met a poor beggar in the street. You must take back one of these little packets to go on with, as a present from me"; and she picked up one and placed it in Alison's hand, and Alison took it gladly.

And that was the beginning of a new Threepenny Trust, for Mr. Cathcart also contributed a little heap, and Mr. Muirhead henceforward made a point of saving every threepenny bit that he received in chang (and I believe that sometimes he asked specially for them when he went to his bank) and bringing them home for Alison's fund; and Uncle Mordaunt must have done the same, for the last time he came to dinner he said to Alison, "I wish you'd get rid of this rubbish for me," and he handed her seventeen of the little coins.

So you see that there is every chance of Mr. James Thomson's kind scheme going on for a long time yet; but, in so far as his own thousand threepenny bits are concerned, the story is done.

WORKS BY E. V. LUCAS

London Lavender
Mr. Ingleside
Over Bemerton's
Listener's Lure
A Wanderer in Florence
A Wanderer in London
A Wanderer in Holland
A Wanderer in Paris
One Day and Another
Fireside and Sunshine
Character and Comedy
Old Lamps for New
The Hambledon Men
The Open Road
The Friendly Town
Her Infinite Variety
Good Company
The Gentlest Art
The Second Post
A Swan and Her Friends
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